BEACHED KEELS

HENRY M. RIDEOUT

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BY

HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT

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TO

CHARLES E. SWAN, M. D.

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I

BLUE PETER

BLUE PETER

I

"YES, it's been swum," puffed the boatman, tugging till the ashen thole-pins creaked. "On'y onct, though, an'— the feller was a buster — that done it — back in '56."

He spat over the gunwale, so that a brown stain of tobacco swept astern on the heaving slant of the green wave. Archer, on the stern thwart, turned his head and looked back over the dazzling water at the mainland, a dark bank of rocks and low hills, with a few roofs and a spire against the late afternoon sun.

"He must have been," he answered. The distance to the American shore was not three miles, but the water was an arm of the icy North Atlantic, and the tide went racing out to sea through the passage.

"Trim the bo't, sir," rejoined the man at the oars, in a tone of cheerful Yankee independence. "It 's mortal hard pullin' in this

sea, an' if you don't keep 'er headed pooty sharp, we may run afoul o' the South Rocks, *after* all."

Archer faced the bow again. "All right," he said easily. The last two years had taught him to value an honest rebuke.

The boatman screwed his lean brown face like a monkey, as he blinked at the sunlight following them, and caught the high waves deftly with his short, tough oars. Beyond him and the pitching bow, Archer saw the tremendous cliffs of the island, a gunshot ahead, towering all pink and ruddy in the sunlight. A few gulls wheeled with forlorn cries along the face of the crags. Above, on the verge against the sky, a clump of tiny trees leaned inland as if tossed by a gale. Years of ocean storms must have blown them thus, for now so deep an autumnal calm lay over sea and island that they were startling in their suggestion of wild motion. It was like a freak in the landscape of some forgetful and bungling painter.

For an instant Archer thought he saw the figure of a man, crouched and furtive, slink-

ing among the trees; but it might have been the gnarled trunks shifting and interweaving with the patches of sky that showed through. And the next instant he was busy with the tiller-ropes. The boat tossed laboriously, dragging as if uphill, round the foot of the lofty broken columns of basalt, where the waves tumbled with a heavy and hollow noise as of caves.

"They 's no landin' that side now, ye see," grunted the Yankee. And even as he spoke, they rounded a point of lifting seaweed, and ran into the cool shadows of the eastward cliffs. Here, though the tide was still against them, they rowed more easily, in almost a calm. Under the astounding lee of the cliffs there fell a kind of instant twilight, a melancholy evening stillness and dusk, so that Archer, turning his eyes from this dark precipice that overawed their cockleshell boat, was surprised to find the wide ocean still aglow, and the tiny sail that nicked the horizon still white in the sun. This island was a sombre place, thought Archer, for an adventure planned so boyishly.

Northward the boat labored, sometimes making a long circuit where a weir straggled into the sea, sometimes tossing an oar's length from the giant columns and boulders, and always without a sign of human beings, and always preceded by the ominous, echoing cries of startled sea gulls.

"Black Harbor 's round this p'int," said the boatman at last.

At the point the cliffs were split asunder into a mighty cove, across the mouth of which ran a bleak sea wall higher than a man's head, — all of gray stones as round as cannon-balls, — wave-built, impregnable, Cyclopean masonry. Through a gap midway in this wall the boat entered Black Harbor.

Letting her run in the still water, the Yankee mopped his bald forehead and grinned.

"Cheerful sort o' place, ain't it?" he asked. "Real homelike and neighborly."

It was a place where Old-World smugglers might land their brandy kegs, or where pirates might put in and share alike. Instead of these, two or three dismantled sloops and pinkies lay moored in a half-circle of dark

water still as a mill pond. Archer could barely descry, landward, a steep black gulch of fir-tops that ran widening down in the darkness, a glacier in evergreen. On either side jutted a headland, both wooded, one scarred with landslides. On the bar, close astern, a solitary figure in yellow oilskins moved along, stooping to gather up wine-colored rags of dulse that had lain drying in the brief sunlight.

To him, the first man they had found on this sombre island, — unless the furtive shadow on the cliff had been a man, — Archer raised his hand in salute. The dulse-gatherer made no response, but stood sullen or apathetic, watching them pull shoreward.

"Go to thunder, then," growled the Yankee under his breath. After a few strokes he added, "Won't git much out o' these fellers. Ye better not try a night's lodgin' among them, specially if you've got money on ye. Ol' man Powell might put ye up. He's queer, they say, but he might. I would n't ast them. I'm a-goin' to sleep in this bo't, an' go back in the mornin'. But by God-

frey!" he broke out with fervor, "'fore bunkin' in with that crowd, I'd ruther resk the whirlpools a-goin' back in the dark."

"Listen, though," said Archer.

The boat was surrounded by the darkness of the looming headlands. A single light from the shore pierced the pool deeply before them, a long, wavering blade of brightness in the still water. The silence had been suddenly broken by a small, sharp, metallic voice singing, — a phonograph squealing out the "Handicap March." "We 've got money to booyin!" it cried nasally. In this dark, forlorn harbor it seemed incredible. Strange echo of cheap New York, thought Archer, it told that rusticity and simple merriment were no more.

"They seem gay enough," he said aloud. The boatman, however, only gave a skeptical grunt.

On the beach, where the good salt air was lost in a stink of fish, the two men parted, — the Yankee, with his fee in his pocket, to pull stolidly out of this harbor which he hated; Archer, to go scrambling up a footpath which,

littered with broken fish-flakes, wound upward among a few unlighted, silent, and malodorous huts. In one of these, through the open door, he saw men and boys plying bloody knives by lantern light; but to his "Good-evening" the fishermen replied only with churlish stares. Plainly, it was an inhospitable shore. Even the phonograph had ceased. The place lay stifled in such a profound silence that he felt the oppression of the headlands towering in the dark. Also he felt himself an ass to have left his decent quarters aboard ship in the mainland town, for the childish whim of visiting an island that had loomed offshore so high and so romantic.

Suddenly, turning the corner of a hut, he halted in a stream of lamplight from another open door. It was very smoky lamplight, and there was a powerful smell of tobacco and stale beer. On the doorstep he nearly fell over a man who lay sprawled and speechless, — a white face with eyes staring upward, apparently in drunken communion with the stars.

"Well," thought Archer, looking into this hillside barroom, where through the gray smoke-layers the figures of men moved tipsily, "I've found plenty of it."

His entrance no one noticed. A snarled group swayed in midfloor, three men pawing one another's shoulders, in an effort to light their pipes from a single match. There was no talk, no sound but the shifting of feet. Other men, ill-favored, sprawled in a half-stupor on a bench that edged the room. On the bar, in the light of the tin reflector behind the lamp, stood the phonograph, silent, its conical throat yawning. A mean little man in a dirty shirt — evidently bartender — had stooped to pitch something out of a window into the yellow grass that waved flush with the window sill and rose on the abrupt slope of the hillside: an easy exit in the event of a raid.

"Where'd the city guy blow in frum?" mumbled a voice. "Look at ut, would ye? Say, this ain't Camperbeller ner Baw Hawber." Mischief was in the voice and the thick laughter.

The attention of the drunken roomful focused itself in silence on Archer, who turned sharply toward the speaker, a red-faced young fellow in hip-boots, leaning unsteadily against the bar. He had evil little eyes, bad teeth widely spaced, and a squash nose that showed the nostrils in front.

Archer was a young man of sudden likes and dislikes, who did not calculate his retorts. The "city guy" could not have appeared in his six feet of solid build, or in the heavy sea clothes, which failed to obscure the convex lines of strength. It must have been suggested in his face, which was of the dark, clear brown that only a very blond man takes from long weathering, and which, though at once impetuous and resolute, showed a fineness of line. He lowered his rough, shining head as he answered:—

"You would n't look half so much like a kid's jack-o'-lantern if you 'd keep your mouth shut."

Two years of seafaring had taught him the advantages of bluntness. They had also taught him to stand by the swiftest disadvan-

tage. He warded off the heavy tumbler with his elbow, leaped forward at him who had thrown it, and pinioned him against the bar. Next instant an ill-smelling half-ton scrimmage of drunken men had surged upon them both.

"Leggo — hell — soak 'im, Beaky — stop that, ye damn fool!" came in smothered fierceness from the swaying, punching, tugging knot of men. Archer, braced mightily, and straining all his muscles, had just cracked two heads together, and was being pulled down, when he was aware that his assailants had slowly fallen apart and stood about, flushed, breathless, and speechless. Some one was knocking at the door masterfully.

Archer followed their drunken eyes. A door at the end of the counter silently came ajar, and a hand was thrust in, — a great, red, freckled hand, fat, but powerful in every joint. Steady as a rock, it held itself there, waiting. The bartender swiftly poured out and passed to it a tumbler brimful of gin. It withdrew with this monstrous drink, while

the whole company stood as if bulldozed into silence. Almost instantly the glass was tossed in empty, the door closed, and heavy footsteps departed.

So strange was the episode that Archer had almost forgotten his own predicament. He turned to find his enemies dispersed, — part of them, led by the young man of the jack-o'-lantern mouth, already slinking into corners.

Tardy and timid, the bartender piped up:—

"No more o' this, boys. The Old Man 's round. He don't stand fer no rows, some nights."

Needless enough the warning seemed, for the men sat cowed. Silence fell again, except for a hiccough or two from the bench. Archer found himself once more the centre of hostile eyes, glowering through the smoke.

"There 's no need of any rows," he spoke out. "I did n't come in here to start one. This man here," he said, nodding toward his broad-faced antagonist, "this man here got no worse than he gave me. If he wants it to go farther, all right; if he does n't, all right. I don't bear any grudge. And all I

came in for was to ask if any of you would put me up for the night."

No one volunteered.

"If any one will,"— the boatman's warning about money checked and changed his speech,— "why, it 'll be better than sleeping out these cold nights."

The silence remained discouraging.

"I was told that Mr. Powell might," he persevered. "Can you tell me where he lives?"

The young man in hip-boots broke out angrily.

"Old man Powell!" he sneered, lurching in his seat. "Ho, yes, I guess he will! I see him doin' it! An' I guess"— He spat out obscenity which showed that Powell had a daughter.

"That 'll do for you, Lehane," called a clear voice from the farthest corner, behind the stove. A tall man stepped out from the shadows, and fixed on the young drunkard a pair of stern eyes. Taller than Archer, and very dark, he was lithe as a cat, with a grace that would have been courtly had it

not been wholly native. "That 'll do for you," he repeated, in a voice strangely clear and deep.

Young Lehane seemed to shrink before the steady brightness of his look. The speaker turned to Archer and scrutinized him as steadily. Without ceremony, yet without offense, he took Archer by the arm and wheeled him about toward the light. The two men stood looking each other in the eye. Archer saw before him a man of his own age, entirely sober, with the face of a thinker, — a face swarthy but clear. The searching eyes, that seemed almost to emit light, were wide-set and very blue. Three big veins scored the broad forehead with irregular lines as blue as the eyes, or as the jersey that clung to the sinewy frame. Intellect, and a kind of grave passion, shone in the whole countenance: the man might have been Hamlet in the rough, but Hamlet with the will of Fortinbras, sad but strong.

"My name 's Peter," he declared simply. "I 'd like to have yours."

It was as if he had forced a reply that he

might study a face out of repose. Archer felt that this young fisherman was weighing his character. But he answered without resentment.

"Mine 's Hugh Archer. I'd be obliged to you if you 'd tell me of a night's lodging somewhere. These other men won't. As for Powell's daughter"— he was going on half jocosely —

"Never mind what Beaky said," the other cut in, with severity. "He 's full o' smut. It 's best forgotten." Then, after a long silence, during which the sharp blue eyes studied further, and seemed to look through Archer into futurity and consequences, Peter added, "Yes, Powell may take ye in. It 's just as well, after all, I should n't wonder."

The tone, unmistakably sad, was one of final decision. The eyebrows under the blue-veined forehead unbent.

"My brother 'll show ye the way."

And with this, stepping to the open door, he whistled into the darkness. Presently there came a patter of bare feet, and a small, ragged boy, bounding up the steps,

stood and peered in with sharp, mischievous eyes.

"Hippolyte," said his elder brother, "show this man over the hill."

Thanking this strange helper, who only nodded in reply, Archer went out, followed by the stares of the silent company. In the dark on the hillside he found it difficult to keep within view of the white patch that was the shirt of his little guide. The boy ducked under fir trees, scaled ledges, dove into underbrush, and clambered always upward, nimble as a goat. Once Archer, though he too was nimble, called a halt, halfway up the steep bank of the gulch. As they rested a moment under the firs, he could see a host of stars, large and bright in the chill air of early autumn, and even larger when seen thus from the depth of the black pass.

"Who is Mr. Powell?" he suddenly asked.

The boy gave an odd chuckle.

"Powell?" he said, in a little dry voice like a satirical old man. "Oh, he owns the island."

"Really!" said Archer in astonishment.

"And so," he continued, after a pause, "you 're all his tenants, I suppose."

"I s'pose so," replied the boy, breaking out into impish laughter. When they had started climbing again, he threw back, "'Specially the Old Man, — Matt Lehane, — oh, yes!" And for some distance up the rocky path under the brushing firs, the child laughed to himself in a kind of pert irony.

At last, gaining the summit, they found themselves high in the open, on a bare ledge. Over this landward side of the island there still lay a twilight in which the stars looked pale, and which showed the gleam of water far below, and the land sloping downward in long, hollow fields.

"See that light?" said the boy. "That 's Powell's. Did Peter say he 'd take ye in? Then p'raps he will. I never seen no one there." Instantly he had slipped out of sight among the firs, through which Archer heard him brushing his way down to Black Harbor again.

As no reply came to his shout of thanks, Archer began the long descent toward the

lighted window. In the west still glimmered a strip of afterglow, brownish red, as if the evening had been hot on the mainland. Still, too, a thread of bright water outlined the shore; and farther out, in the dark, lay vaguely the deeper blackness of the whirlpools. North and south loomed the colossal cliffs of the island. But his way toward the cove led through a gentle, pastoral country, — concave slopes, with short, dry grass, still warm as in early evening. By crossing the ridge above the harbor, he had been transported into a different region, of Thessalian rocks and Arcadian fields.

When at last he rounded the corner of Powell's house, he was surprised to find it an apparently civilized dwelling. About the door the leaves of a vine stirred faintly in the air. A stone doorstep sounded grittily beneath his feet; and just as his hand was raised to knock, he saw through the open window a room lined with books, a flickering fire, and the dim figure of a little elderly man sitting by a yellow-shaded lamp. From beyond the lamp came the clear voice of a girl

reading aloud; but he could see only one arm of the chair, and the white skirt flowing down over her knees.

The man raised his gray head to interrupt the reader.

"That 's not so good as the original," he said, in a tone of fretful resignation.

Archer let his hand fall, and instinctively turned to go back toward Black Harbor.

II

The instinct was that of the social rebel. The house seemed too plainly the comfortable summer cottage of sophisticated people. He had not been in that atmosphere since the days when his uncle and aunt had dragged him to the seashore, to dress, and eat, and talk, and — among rich women growing fat and rich men growing bald — to plan trivial monotonies beside the moving eternity of the ocean. It was to escape just this that he had turned sailor, and set his own naked character to wrestle with life. So now he turned to go away.

But the girl's ears must have been sharp.

"There 's some one at the door, father," he heard her say. Instantly perceiving that it would not do to disappear and leave them alarmed, he stood where he was on the doorstep. But he afterward remembered that the girl's voice showed merely surprise, and no trace of fear.

The figures disappeared from the room, he heard the scratch of a match, and presently footsteps approached the door. It opened to show the light of a shaking candle, the little man's peering face, smooth-shaven but lined with years, and over his narrow shoulders the face of the girl, alert, clear, large-eyed, in a dusky radiance of brown hair that glimmered in the uncertain light. Their shadows leaped and swung on the walls behind them. Dim eyes and bright, sharpened brows and serene, both fixed their sight on the burly young sailor-man before them.

"Who is it?" said the man, in a gentle voice.

Archer, who had easily met the hostile looks of the revelers in Black Harbor, was abashed before this girl.

"Never mind," he said confusedly, "that is — I was looking for a night's lodging, — and they — over in the harbor — they told me that Mr. Powell — But of course," he floundered, "I did n't know what you were like — or your house — I beg your pardon."

The little man laughed quietly, as one not given to laughter. The girl's eyes shone with encouraging merriment.

"What am I like, then?" asked Mr. Powell, holding up the candle, so that the girl's head disappeared in his shadow. It was a sad face, long, thin, very pale, with black eyes. He was bald over the temples, and a triangle of gray hair ran to a point midway above a forehead engraved with parallel lines. "I had hoped to seem no worse than other men," he continued, with an irony not unkind. "And as for my house, if you will come in, you will find it tolerable."

"Why, sir," replied Archer, somewhat nettled, "of course I did n't mean that. The others seemed a rough lot, and I expected — Your house is too good, sir, — too good for a sailor. I would n't have disturbed you" —

"My dear young man," said the owner of the island soberly, "there 's no place but this fit for you to sleep in. Besides that, I 'd be heartily glad to have you here. We have no visitors year in and out." He shifted his candle, so that the girl's face reappeared, shining with undisguised interest in the situation. "But you 'll be able to sleep here, — better than I, at least. A sailor — and of your age — you 're doubly welcome. Come in." With the stiffness of courtesy in disuse, he stepped back to make room. The girl retreated into the shadows.

"You 're very kind, sir," said Archer, entering. As the man set his candle down on a low table, the light revealed a little hall and staircase of brown butternut wood. The absence of ornament might have made the place severe, had it not been for candlelight and soft shadows, and the presence of the girl, a slim white figure against the dark panels.

"You called yourself a sailor," the man continued; "the navy, perhaps?"

"Tramp sailing vessels, mostly, sir," Archer replied with some stiffness.

"Ah, — English, I should say?"

"American."

His host's face fell somewhat. It brightened as he ventured:—

"Did you ever chance to be in Eastern ports with any of Her Majesty's ships?" And when Archer, wondering, gave a negative answer, there was silence for a time.

"It is a pity," the little man reflected. "It was a foolish hope, of course, — but we like to reach out after all the little fragments — glimpses"— he ended with something like a sigh. This time the silence grew embarrassing.

"Father," said the girl quietly, "don't you think"—

The large eyes of the pale little man came back sadly, as from a distance. "Your pardon, Helen," he said. "I have long since forgotten my manners. This is my daughter, Mr."—

Archer, supplying the name, spoke to the girl for the first time face to face. Her words were as conventional as his, but something in voice and manner, something frank, bright,

and simple, made them her own. The girls among whom his aunt had so carefully brought him he had known at first glance for natural enemies and strategists. This one seemed as naturally a direct and wholesome character. He liked her brown face, her speech, and above all the light, free motion of her walk as she crossed the hall and led them into the lighted room where he had first seen them sitting.

Here there was comfort, — the soft radiance of the yellow-shaded lamp, the warmth of a fire that tempered the fresh evening air from the open windows. The rows of books that lined the walls from floor to ceiling gave out a faint, pleasant smell, indefinable. Over the fireplace, in the only space left vacant of books, looked forth the white cast of a head, the tragic beauty of Meleager.

After a few questions and answers as to Archer's presence on the island, "You will pardon me," said the prim little man, motioning him to an armchair by the fire, "if we continue our reading and finish the chapter. I have perhaps become too methodical in my

habits. It is not a merry book, but you can warm yourself meanwhile."

The girl said nothing, though she looked possibly a little disappointed. As they took their places, she became once more for Archer a voice from behind the lamp, and a white skirt flowing down beyond the edge of the table. But the sound of her was, in a way, as good as the sight; and the voice was filled with reality, with the meaning of the words: —

"And finally, the first night that followed that day! . . .

"Lying in the 'Arabian room,' I felt constantly through my weary half sleep the haunting impression, infinitely sad, of the unaccustomed silence that had fallen on the other side of the wall — and forever — in the room of Aunt Claire. Oh! the dear voices and the dear protecting sounds that I had heard there for so many years through this wall, when the quiet of night had come in the house! Aunt Claire opening her great closet that creaked in a peculiar fashion (the closet where they had put away forever the

Ours aux pralines); Aunt Claire exchanging a few words, which I could just hear, with my mother, who lay in the room beyond: 'Are you asleep, sister?' And her great clock on the wall — now stopped — that used to strike so loud; the clock which made so much noise when it was wound, and which, to our great amusement, she used sometimes to wind on the stroke of midnight, — so that it had become a traditional pleasantry in the house, whenever we heard any noise at night, to lay the blame on Aunt Claire and her clock. . . . Ended, all this, ended. Gone to her place of burial, Aunt Claire, — and my mother, doubtless, will prefer not to return to the room next to hers; silence, then, has fallen there forever. For so many years, it was my joy and my peace to hear them both, to recognize their dear, good old voices that came clearly through the wall in the stillness of the night. . . . Ended, now; never, never shall I hear them more."

Archer was happily ignorant of what the book might be. But when the girl's voice had ceased, he was aware that her father,

forgetful of guest and daughter, was staring into the fire, lost in remote thoughts; that Helen herself had risen, and stood looking on them doubtfully; and that the silence in the room was insufferably mournful. At last, as he was about to make a rough attempt at breaking it, his host rose, picked up the book, and, crossing to the inmost corner of the library, copied out something upon the broad page of another book that lay open on a desk. "A bad rendering, but it will do," he said. Then, stooping, he carefully took from against the bookshelves a violoncello which had stood gleaming soft and brown in the lamplight.

The girl turned and smiled at Archer, as if reassured, and yet appealing.

"Now you will have better entertainment," she said, with a gayety that seemed not quite so natural as the rest of her ways. "Perhaps you would rather have something to eat," she added, as her father tuned the strings. "I'll get it for you when he has played."

Archer smiled in return, but only shook his head, for her father was already waiting, and now formally announced: —

"Bach — Suite for violoncello — *prælu-dium.*"

The fervent voice of the 'cello filled the room. Archer, who knew good playing, listened in delight; but presently his eyes wandered to the girl, as she now sat looking into the fire in her turn, and to the sad, pale face of her father, bending over, rapt in his music. Strange entertainers; yet stranger still was the calm, unconscious egotism of sorrow in this host who had forgotten him. Through *præludium* the music ran, through *sarabande*, and into *bourrée*, when of a sudden it stopped lamely.

"I 've not the heart for it to-night," said the player, as he restored the violoncello to its place. "This young man from the sea has set me thinking about Arthur."

"He must be hungry, father," the girl suggested, with something like timidity. "Shall I get" —

"No," he decided. "Tell Barbara to come here."

The girl's face darkened, and she went out with visible reluctance. Presently came

a shuffle of feet, and through curtains at the back of the room there entered a tall old woman, bent but strong, who at the sight of Archer spread apart her clumsy hands in surprise.

"Barbara," said her master, "please bring us something to eat and drink."

When the old woman had disappeared, the girl looked in again at the door of the hall, mystically bright once more above the candle flame.

"Good-night to you both," she called. Once more the cheeriness of her voice was troubled. "I'll show you about the island in the morning, Mr. Archer. You will like it, I hope." She stood for a moment undecided, then slowly went up the stairs, a shining figure against the brown panels.

Archer, replying with some commonplace, was conscious that she had stolen the brightness from the room. Though hungry after his wandering, he hardly noticed what the old servant left on the table before him. While he nibbled at something, and slowly drank the whiskey-and-water that Mr. Powell

had poured out, his interest, for the time, became merely polite. And his host, though helping himself rather freely from the fat-bellied bottle, was calmly distant in his own thoughts.

"Do you come here every summer, Mr. Powell?" asked Hugh, after an interval.

The sad, prophetic eyes returned to the present, and as they studied the young man anew, their melancholy look was modified by a smile that was essentially kind.

"Every summer?" the little man repeated. "My boy, we live here all the year round, and have lived here since — for the last fourteen years. You look astonished. But why is not this island as good to live and die on as the mainland? They send us over clothing, and food, and books. You see for yourself how comfortable" — and he waved his hand about.

"And your daughter is always with you here?" asked the visitor, amazed at this new aspect of the case.

"Yes, indeed — like the best of daughters," was the calm reply.

Archer meditated, with thoughts unfriendly. There was some hidden malice in his next words, —

"Why, sir, you 're like Prospero and Miranda."

The other started in his chair, suddenly wide awake. But the hint was lost.

"Prodigiously apt!" he exclaimed, all in a flutter. "So simple, but so good. It holds closely. And I had never once thought of it! Young man," he cried, almost beaming, "why did n't you tell me you were no common sailor?" In his joy, he poured for himself from the bottle. "A boy who has read, in these days!" He drained his glass and refilled it. "You must stay with me — a week at least — and we shall have good talk, I foresee. — This parallel of yours — I am ashamed never to have seen it — showing that an outsider has the better perspective of one's life." He got up and walked about nervously before the fire. "I am Prospero, to be sure,— and my book — and as for Trinculos and Stephanos, Black Harbor is lousy with them. Here is my cell — and

Helen is Miranda — and luckily there are no Ferdinands" —

Suddenly he stopped, glanced at Archer's broad shoulders and shining head, and then stared into the fire.

"Hm!" he said, his enthusiasm gone. After a silence, his voice was sad again. "Yes, though I am Prospero, I have no magic." And he sighed. "But you shall see my book. No one else has read it, not even Helen."

Stepping to the desk in the corner, he brought over and laid in the lamplight a large book in black leather, — the same into which he had been copying. Archer, looking on over his shoulder, could see in his movements a tremulous pride.

On the first page they read the title,— "This Bank and Shoal of Time."

"You see," said the little man, already transformed into the explanatory author, "the title is naturally suggested to one living, as I do, on an island surrounded by the eternal sea. But I must explain that you will find here not so much my own thoughts as those

of other men in all ages and countries, — their most serious thoughts, and far-reaching. I have not yet connected them with my own interpretation, or indeed arranged them in any orderly fashion."

Archer could hardly forbear to smile. But he had no such difficulty when he had once begun to read. Under the title stood a quotation, —

> "So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
> And death once dead, there 's no more dying then."

The other pages were a kind of nightmare hodge-podge, in neat manuscript, of mortuary fragments. A few he could recognize, many he could not. He read rapidly, with the assistance of his host, who turned the pages eagerly.

"*Sancti Ambrosii*: *de Excessu Fratris Sui*, *Satyris*, *lib. i*, 18. — Habeo plane pignus meum, quod nulla mihi peregrinatio jam possit avellere: habeo quas complectar, reliquias: habeo tumulum, quem corpore tegam: habeo sepulcrum, super quod jaceam."

"Life is like traveling backward in a cart; we see only what has passed and is moving away from us."

"*Meleager, fragm.* 532.— All men, once dead, are nothing more than earth and shadow. Nought returns to nought."

"*Von Hartmann: Philosophy of the Unconscious, ii, p.* 480. — After a serious consideration we have been obliged to reply that all existence in this world brings with it more pain than pleasure; that consequently it would be preferable that the world should not exist."

"That was a fine euphemism of the Greeks', to call the dead 'the tired ones.'"

"The prophet Silenus answered in these words the question of Midas, king of Phrygia: 'Children of a day, of a race doomed to pain and hard trials, why do you force me to say things that it were better for you not to know? For it is for those who are ignorant of their misfortunes that life has the least sorrow. — Of all things the best for man is not to live, even though he have an excellent nature; what is best for all men and for all women is not to be born.' *Aristotle: on the Soul.*"

"All this lamentable mockery: to love with all our heart beings and things which

each day, each hour sets itself to wear away, to weaken, to carry off piecemeal;— and after having struggled, struggled with anguish to keep some few bits of all this which passes away, to pass in our turn."

Archer could read no more with patience.

"It is a remarkable book," he commented with sincerity, and drew away from the table.

"Remarkable! You may venture as much," retorted the scholar, still bent over the melancholy pages, on which he seemed to batten. Then, slowly straightening himself, he closed the book and put it away in the desk. "The only book of its kind, and the deepest, the truest — These are only the crude material, but you shall see." He took a sip from his glass, wandered thoughtfully to the window,— which the old servant had closed,— and stood looking out. "It must be a calm night. The stars and the lights from the town — the reflections are very clear. It would be beautiful, but it is a symbol. Ah, 'this bank and shoal of time!' Out there in the dark are the whirlpools — and the channel" — he broke into muttered quotation: —

"'Compescitunda, scilicet omnibus,
Quicumque terrae munere vescimur
Enaviganda.'

"Enaviganda," he repeated, and was silent for a long time.

Archer was moved to question him: —

"Are n't those fellows in Black Harbor dangerous neighbors, sir?"

The scholar turned on him his long, pale face, showing eyes dull with indifference. "I hardly ever see them, even," he said.

"And your daughter?" the young man could not help persisting. But the answer missed his point surprisingly.

"Helen? — oh, you mean that it is lonely here? — Perhaps. But then, she is well and healthy, as you see. And she has lived here since a child. When my wife died, I came to this island, to retire for a time, as I thought. But when the news came that Arthur was gone, too — it was impossible to think of going back among men and cities. It is better here. — As for Helen, — why, after all, you know —

"'The summer's flower is to the summer as sweet
Though to itself it only live and die.'"

Archer could have struck the man. He held his peace with difficulty, until, after pacing up and down, smiling faintly at the aptness of his quotation, Mr. Powell came to himself again to say: —

"Here comes Barbara to show you your room. Good-night, sir, and I hope you will sleep well."

Archer followed the servant and her candle up the stairs to a landing and into a plain but pleasant little bedchamber, warmed by an open fire, and overlooking the cove, the water, and the long, reflected lights of the town. The tall old woman hesitated as she said good-night.

"It's good to have you here, sir," she ventured, in her timorous voice. "It is, indeed." And her face, brown and wrinkled as a walnut, shone with kindness.

Left to himself, he stood thinking over this strange landfall. The black glacier of firs over the hill had been gloomy enough, the inhabitants like the place; but this pastoral slope of the island — was it better? Pity for the girl was his uppermost thought, — a pity

to which his rough, working life had rendered him unfamiliar. Sometimes in his youthful melancholy he had thought his own lot hard, — an orphan, too rich, among worldly relatives who could neither inspire nor direct a right ambition. But this girl, living alone here —

"The summer's flower is to the summer as sweet,"—

"Odious!" he almost cried aloud. He could not wait till morning to see her and talk to her. At least he could not sleep: for an hour or more he must have sat on the edge of his bed, thinking over this philosopher of charnel fragments, this vague egotist who could quote so inhumanly, and survey with such mournful gusto the transiency of things. At times a faint stir in the house showed that others were still awake.

His windows were open. So, apparently, were those on the landing of the staircase; for suddenly he heard a voice near at hand speaking into the night, — a muddled voice that ran the words together thickly: —

"Fair-ss-a-scar — when-on'y-one — is-s — shining-in-the-sty" —

Then collected, and very precise: "Disgusting metathesis! — No, that is not the word"—

"Come along, please, sir," whispered the old woman's voice plaintively.

III

The pillow and the counterpane were damp when he awoke, late, after a night of worried tossing. Fog, white and cold, filled the chamber as with smoke, and drifted so thickly past the window that he could see only the dim outlines of a little garden below; a few shrubs, a soft-colored tangle of sweet peas, and the high heads of golden glow shining through the white obscurity. Out of the fog came the smell of seaweed and the faint noise of waves.

Quickly putting on his damp clothes, he hurried downstairs, in some disquietude as to the time of day. No one met him in the little hall of the butternut paneling. A breakfast table still waited, white and shining, beside a fire that roared in the wide chimney; and in the corner a tall clock beat heavily toward

the hour of ten. He waited, glad of the chance to warm himself before the crackling birch logs.

At last a little door opened under the stairs, and the tall old woman looked in, smiling, to wish him a good-morning.

"Miss Helen said," she announced, "that you must n't mind eating alone, sir. She and Mr. Powell won't be down till later." Something in the situation had fluttered and embarrassed this good creature, who nearly spilled the coffee when she brought it in.

So at an excellent breakfast he found himself alone, and vastly disappointed. All the morning he sat about, watching by turns the fire within doors, the white void without, and fidgeting more than he had ever believed possible. At one time a voice overhead somewhere continued steadily as in reading aloud; he could only hope that if Helen was helping her father to pass the forenoon, she did not do it too willingly. When the voice stopped, and still no one came downstairs, he flung outdoors in disgust, and wandered down the little path in a misty profusion of bright flowers.

Smoking his pipe, he watched the sun burn away the fog, which lifted enough to show that the house, a comfortable building of the native red stone, faced the shore from a beautiful hollow field which curved as wide and graceful as the long arc of pink sand-beach below. Headlands north and south were blotted out, but the base of the great red walls stretched along between the green, heaving water and the white, slow-rising mist. The voice of the sea, vague, widespread, and hushing; the heavy air, a tepid mingling of fog and sunshine; the sense of lonely heights obscured, — and this was the island where a young girl, radiantly alive, must wear out her years with a tippler who studied the crumbling of time!

When he returned to the house, the sunshine had already conquered; and in the hall father and daughter were awaiting him, — the former very white and evasive, the latter a little tired, and not beautiful as by candlelight, but brown-eyed, winning, a gracious young white-robed mistress of the house.

"Good-morning," she cried, with honest

gladness, and came quickly forward to meet him. Her hand was a funny little tanned thing to be shaking his hard paw.

Just what happened during lunch he could never recall, except that his host's hands trembled slightly, and that he himself could look at Helen over a bowl of poppies, — "astonishing how late they lingered in this salt air," remarked the scholar, — and that he willingly did most of the talking, when he found that to a pair of shining eyes his two years of sordid knocking about appeared rich as an Odyssey. Once, when he happened to speak of a burial at sea, the eyes were troubled; but Mr. Powell, pricking up his ears, demanded particulars. Then came a tedium of sitting about while the scholar talked, kindly but feebly. At last, however, he declared: —

"Helen has promised to show you about. I 'll not spoil your young enjoyment by going. — No, no," he chirped, as Archer would have feigned to protest, "I 'm not well to-day. And to tell the truth, Mr. Archer, I cannot care so much for nature as I did. I see the

changing of the seasons, rather than the seasons themselves. But go you on, you two."

And so Archer found himself outdoors in the sunshine with the girl, talking and laughing, while her father, from the door, looked mournfully after them down the little flowering path.

Their escape led them southward along the curve of the hollow field, high above the shining water, and toward the steep ascent of the southern cliffs. The short, yellow-bleached grass of autumn was already dry and slippery underfoot, its tiny spears quivering in the warm breeze that had sprung up since the vanishing of the fog.

"I'm glad you came here," she said, looking up happily. Walking beside him, brown-faced, bareheaded, she had changed into a creature of the sunlight and sea air, a light-footed huntress of the island heights.

"There is our vegetable garden," she said, pointing to some green rows behind the house. "My father and I work there a great deal."— He laughed to hear the young huntress deliver such prosaic words.—"If you do

that to things I'm proud of, perhaps you won't think much of what I was going to show you," she threatened. "I forgot — such a traveler as you are" —

"No, indeed," he laughed. "I never saw anything I liked better." He had been looking down at the back of her head, and her hair, wind-blown, that gleamed like newly weathered bronze. "Show me everything. That 's a landing-pier down on your beach. Do you sail?"

"No," she confessed. "My father won't go on the water. We had a rowboat, but it went adrift last spring."

"But in case of sickness or anything?" he wondered. "Can you telephone to the mainland?"

"Why, no," replied the girl, in surprise. "I don't believe he ever thought of that. The boat brings us over all we need, every Saturday. Oh, and in such weather! In winter it 's larks to wade down through the snow and help them land. And sometimes there 's a letter from my uncle Morgan. And sometimes it 's too rough for the men

to go back, and they stay and talk. I like them very much, though my father does n't."

Her happiness was truth itself. She had forgotten whatever troubles the night before or the morning might have contained.

Far below in the cove lay the long red curve of the beach, with a thin black line of dead seaweed drawn as if by a compass along the high-water mark. The tide was beginning to ebb, but near the shore a "back eddy" moved toward them, and with it a strange multitudinous plashing, like continual waves among myriads of tiny rocks.

"Oh, look!" she cried, plucking him by the sleeve. "See the herring!" Familiarity could have made the sight no less beautiful to her.

Where the spurs of the cliff sprang upward from the cove, the turmoil was working toward them over the water. Countless tongues of silver flame leapt up, fell, leapt, and advanced with the same continuous plashing; here and there the curved flash of little bodies wove swiftly in and out of water, pliant threads of white fire. It was like a

squall of silver pieces blown along the surface of the tide, with the noise and the upward-leaping drops of a ponderous, concentrated, and invisible shower.

"There 'll be good fishing to-night for those poor fellows over the hill," said Helen, "if these greedy herring-gulls don't eat it all."

Sure enough, a white flock of the lesser terns came wheeling, on bent, sickle wings, along the red face of the crags, and with mournful cat-calls pursued the shoal, poising, swerving, diving under water, to stagger into the air again, each with a glitter in its bill and a sprinkling of bright spray from its wings.

"I never liked them very much," she said, "since I read a fairy story, when I was a little girl, where they were persons transformed by a wicked queen. They 've always seemed uncanny. Is n't it queer? But they are really very white and clean; and, poor creatures, they live round these cold rocks, and their cries are so lonely."

The two had stood close together, frankly sharing their happiness in the sight, frankly

glad of each other's company, like old friends. Shyness and constraint were beneath the nature of this girl, who had the clear self-possession which comes from a life lived rightly alone, or which a young person receives from association with an old one.

"Did you have any playmates here when you were a little girl?" he asked.

"No," was the answer, possibly with a tinge of sadness. "Arthur was so much older" — She paused, looking absently after the wheeling gulls, and the shoal now black in the distance. Then, as she started walking again: "But I had many games," she said brightly. "You would think them silly. Why, this field that we 're crossing: I used to walk from end to end of it all day, alone and perfectly happy, tapping the ground with a forked hazel stick my father cut for me, and playing I was a witch, divining. It was the happiest day in my life when I came tapping along into this — see" —

The rise of the hill had become more abrupt, as they neared the ascent to the high land above the cliffs. In the deepest of the

slope, smooth-curved as an amphitheatre, sheltered, and facing the warmth of the southwest, the grass lay greener than elsewhere, and there grew a clump of alders. Toward this she led him, and pointed proudly to a tiny spring of clear water, with a bottom of pink sand. A song-sparrow, surprised in his bath, flitted into the bushes, leaving the water all a-quiver.

"Was n't that good divining for an inexperienced witch?" she asked, elated. "I found it the first day. Afterward I tried to find gold and silver, but never did; and so I played more round this spring, and made up things about it. Some of them I made up so hard that I believe them even now,— like this, that whoever drinks of it must come back to the island before he dies."

Archer flung himself down, bent his shining head, and drank deep of the cool water. He rose, laughing, but more than half in earnest.

"I 'm glad you did that," said Helen, in the same spirit. And they moved away, silent, along the slope of the amphitheatre.

"Now here," she suddenly declared, stopping, "here I 'm going to ask you two questions. You 'll never guess them. The second depends on the first. It 's a test. You can't ever guess them. But if you don't," she laughed, "I shall be disappointed and shan't like you."

Archer forbore to make the complimentary retort. With her, it would have been silly. "I 'll try my best," he replied.

"Now, first," she said, with a pretty air of pedagogy, "my father and I call this hollow the Marathon field, sometimes. Why is that?"

Archer rubbed his brows and frowned.

"Now it is n't Byron. I hate him," said his examiner. "I 'll give you a clue. What is this underfoot? You 'll never find it growing so far north again."

They were standing in a little patch of feathery green stuff, with a few belated yellow flowers. A faint aromatic smell came to the aid of his memory.

"Fennel!" he cried joyfully. "I know — it 's what old Pan gave to what-was-his-

name? — the runner: and the Greeks fought in a field of it."

"Good, good!" she cried, in unconcealed astonishment. "I never expected you to. But you won't answer the second right. What is the happiest kind of death?"

His honest brown face clouded. Here, he thought, the poison of her father's spirit worked in her. Yet her bright eyes showed only interest in the game.

"Of course you can't. I 'll give you another clue," said this Ariadne. "The second answer is in the same story, and it is n't about fighting the Persians. Now what is it?"

"What is the happiest kind" — he reflected. This time he really gave thought to the question. "Why," he said at last, with conviction, "the way this same fellow in the poem died, running into Athens with the news of victory, among them all — still young" —

The slim white-gowned figure almost danced in the patch of fennel. "You 're wonderful!" she cried, clapping her hands. "That was it —

" 'Like wine through clay,
Joy bursting his heart, he died — the bliss!'

Now you know just what this place always makes me think of, and you thought of it, too, nearly all by yourself."

It was idle to pretend that this simple game had not established a bond between them. The world might have been young again, or they might have known each other since Marathon itself. For a moment they stood in the warm sunlight, with faces shining on each other, undisguised; then they began to climb toward the bare skyline of the heights, slipping on the yellow grass, scrambling, helping each other up the steep bank, happy as the encircling sunshine. The warm breeze followed them, sweet with pennyroyal crushed underfoot.

IV

On the height their footing changed to bare pink ledges with grass-grown intervals of thin earth. A spiked wall of dark firs and a little grove of white birches disappointed him by cutting off all view of Black Harbor

on the seaward side. Powell's cove, too, had vanished: the hollow field, the spring, the house itself, had, in a few steps from the edge of the ascent, dropped from sight so utterly that the island seemed one great table-land some ten miles long, continuous, though curving at the middle to a narrow ridge. From their way along the verge, they could look back, straight down upon the shining channel, the low mainland, and the smoke-blurred elms, masts, and crisscross streets of the petty town. Alone and aloft, they walked slowly, their shadows already spindling before them over the ledge and the yellow grass. Sometimes they crossed a bare scar of rattling pebbles, that in the shelving places rolled from under their feet, and, unless stopped in some green slant of matted ground-pine, fell silently over the cliff, down to the black seaweed at the foot of that dizzy height.

"I come here often," said Helen, after the long silence of outdoor companions. "This little faint path is all my own making. Oh, it was your boat I saw crossing yester-

day afternoon! — Two of you? — But you could n't have seen me, for I was lying down close to the edge, and just saw you disappear round the southern end."

"It must be melancholy to come up on this height all alone," said Archer.

"Oh, no," she returned. "That 's the strangest part of it. I never feel alone anywhere on the island, partly because I used to make believe so much. And then I 've always had a queer feeling that there was some one moving along parallel to me, not far off, and not very near — a kind of invisible person that you might almost see out of the corner of your eye — especially in or near woods, and among white birches more than anywhere. My father says it 's very interesting, and shows how paganism begins. I don't know. But it seems real. Sometimes — like drinking from the witch's spring, you know — I 've looked up quickly to catch a sight of it — the presence. But it never appears. It makes you feel quite safe — and yet somehow — cautious. See how I talk about my notions! It 's your

fault. You 've been silent. Tell me more about what you 've seen and done."

"No, please," said Archer. "I 've told you most of it. It 's been a pretty dull life, sailing round; and yours is so much better." Walking behind her again, he could see the neat springing of her ankles, the free play of white-clad shoulders, the bronze gleams in her hair, blown away from him. But he was thinking of this childhood into which she had given him glimpses; and pity strove with admiration.

"The white birches I spoke of," she continued, gayly voluble, facing about and pointing, "see, there they are, behind, against the firs. You should see them in winter, too. Once, after a storm, they were all weighed down with ice till I was afraid they would break. But it was very beautiful — bending along together under the evergreens behind — and made me think of princesses in a fairy story, all stealing by the foot of a dark wall, you know, to escape."

They clattered across a frail foot-bridge, spanning a narrow black gorge, in which the

sea splashed somewhere down in the darkness. Then, between the empty sunlit air of the verge to the right and the wall of firs to the left, the breadth of yellow grass led them upward to the skyline and the southern end of the island. Often Archer had to climb ahead and pull her up the arduous hillside. As they gained the top, the firs gave place to pines and cedars, whose trunks, bleached by salt winds, had been blown about till the roots writhed above ground and the distorted branches grew away from the sea. From among the trunks gleamed the eastern sky. This was the same tempestuous grove that Archer had seen from the boat; and perhaps it was some remembrance of the lurking ambiguity of movement among these trunks that made him ask: —

"Have n't the fellows in Black Harbor ever troubled your father or you? They seem a rough set"—

"No, indeed," replied Helen wonderingly. "They 're just poor fishermen, I think. They only came and lived there; my father said nothing. But he has forbidden me to go

up on the hill above the harbor, so I 've never even seen them. Oh, that 's not true. Once last spring an awful man met me up here, — a young man, but dreadful, with a kind of flat face and nose, — and began to speak to me. I was so frightened I almost started to run, and did n't hear what he said. And then another man, very tall, in a blue jersey, with very bright eyes, and blue veins in his forehead, overtook him and spoke to him, and they both went away. I did n't come up here for weeks after, not even on the Sunday mornings. But I did n't see them again. There! if I've not told you the only secret I have from my father!"

Archer rejoiced in this guileless compliment. At the same time he seemed to recognize two acquaintances in the narrative, and was greatly disturbed. But just then the ocean lay before them. They had come to the very end of the island.

One peep over the edge, where blue harebells quivered in the wind, made him look well to his footing on the parched grass. He drew back beside Helen, and the two

stood looking down the great sheer drop of shattered brown rock, — broken pillars of basalt, stained with orange, and rust, and deep green, and whitened with bird-droppings. From the foot of the cliffs and the little crescents of shingle beach below, the tide was ebbing away almost without a sound, it was so calm under the lee of the head. Helen tossed over a pebble, and a score of white gulls started up from among the rocks, to go wheeling from headland to headland, with peevish cries as of lonely wickedness. Amazingly high in the sunlight the big birds soared, with heads bent down; amazingly far beneath moved the sea, — endless, inward-toiling lines, rising away to the weary, straight, infinite circumscription of the horizon.

"It is beautiful," said he at last, "and unspeakably sad. One is very little — and yet glad to feel so."

"That was well added," said the girl thoughtfully. There was nothing further to be said.

Out here at the meeting of earth, air, and water, the wind seemed more cold, the sun-

light pale, and the girl's face, from being young, had taken on the mysterious look of age that sometimes comes to one who has long watched the sea. Their comradeship grew closer, — little human allies tacitly united in the face of vast and melancholy nature. A slow-forming thought suddenly overwhelmed him: here was a girl who, in her eyes, her speech, her acts, showed that her life could include and master sorrow. And he had walked with her hardly two hours, and he could not bear to leave her.

"The hardest part," said the girl sadly, as if speaking to herself in the void of ocean air, "is not to know what my father really believes and really does n't. He answered me once that God was the Ether of Euripides. Now what can a young girl make of that?" Suddenly her wide brown eyes turned to him. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I was thinking — what have I said? — But you 'll forget it — and you 're not a stranger" —

"No," he faltered, his voice thick and coming with an effort. "No, I 'm not a stranger — I won't tell — and even if I did, no one

aboard ship would care — or know who — My three days' leave are up. I'll be gone to-morrow, anyway."

She cried out in pure dismay.

"Oh, you must n't!" Then, flushed and confused, — "I forgot, of course. You 're such a wanderer — and have your duties, too" — She smiled uncertainly. "Why, I must have been making believe once more — it becomes a habit, probably — even to playing I had a big brother again. It was very nice to have one — just for an afternoon — but silly — and for a grown-up! — I beg your pardon"—

"Helen!" he cried, forgetting everything, and stepping in front of her, as if to intercept her look and her thoughts from going wide upon the sea. What he would have said further, he never knew; for in the wild manœuvre he nearly slipped from his feet.

"Come back from the edge!" she cried, and seized him by the jacket. "You must n't!" The movement swung them together, she still grasped the rough cloth by instinct, and for one fiery moment their faces were perilously

close, their spirits passed in flame between the shining eyes.

"Oh," she cried again, letting go and shrinking back astounded, staring at him with a pale face of terror. "Oh, what have we done? We don't *know* each other, not even *know* each other!" She covered her face. "Something passed between us, it can't be unsaid or undone. What must you — please, please go away! I shall pay for this alone, — oh, the long retribution!" She cried bitterly, bowed down and trembling.

Archer drew near, neither allowed nor forbidden, and tried to console her, like a clumsy child striving to put together the fragments of some priceless thing.

"Helen," he said. "Don't cry so. Don't." He awkwardly patted her head, but she only nodded once as if to acknowledge the consolation. The slanting sunlight fell kindly round these two troubled children, aloft on the lonely headland.

"I mean it for good, always," he begged hurriedly. "The time is no matter — long or short — if it had n't been then it would

have been never. Don't you see, Helen? Just believe. I can't prove it to you. Why," he cried in despair, "if I had n't meant it for always, I 'd no more have done it than I 'd have tried to kiss good old Barbara the cook!"

The girl still hid her face, but laughter mingled funnily with her sobs.

"You *can* prove it," she declared suddenly. And seizing him by the hand, but with her face averted, she began to lead him away from the precipice, toward the grove of wind-swept cedars and pines. "You can say it to me before my brother," she said, eagerly tugging him along.

Wondering, he followed. They found themselves in a little natural clearing among the bleached trunks and dark, distorted branches. At the back of the clearing a tall wooden cross, with gray arms wide-stretched, faced out toward the sea. Helen dropped his hand, and they entered side by side, quietly, as if into a little chapel. They stood in shadow, the sunlight barely tipping the dark trees.

"Here is where I come on Sunday morn-

ings," she said with reverence. "It 's my — it's everything to me."

Together they read the inscription on the gray cross.

To the Memory
of
ARTHUR POWELL
buried at Sea
February 7, 18 —
Lat. 10° 24′ 17″ N. Long. 135° 0′ 43″ W.

"He was my brother," said Helen, almost in a whisper. "Older than I, and dearer to me than any one else. I can't remember my mother, but he seems to have been here only yesterday. You were just his age, and somehow like him: that was what made my father — made him more sad even than usual, last night."

The gulls complained in the wide solitude of the air.

"This is your church," said Archer, at last. "And if your brother were here, I would tell him just what I told you outside."

The girl gave him her hand with a kind of grave joy.

"Perhaps he hears you," she said, and

her voice was full of mystery. "My father comes here seldom; but once, after he had stood here for a long time, he said at last, 'Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore.' I like to believe that of Arthur."

Hand in hand they moved away.

"Was that a noise in the trees?" she asked, stopping suddenly. They looked about, but saw nothing, and went on, slowly, out of the little clearing. Still silent, they faced the homeward way along the cliff.

Archer took her hand in both of his.

"You believe now," he said.

Swiftly, for an instant, she clung about him, astonishingly small at close quarters, and hiding her face comically under his elbow.

"Oh, I knew you would come!" she said brokenly, laughing and crying together. "I knew you 'd come. When you drank from the spring, and answered the two questions, I knew it was you — all the time. No, no, you must n't." She sprang away, laughing, and raced down the slope toward the sunset.

Archer could run, but the chase lasted to the brink of the farthest hill. They stopped,

laughing with what breath they had, and from the height, still lit by the sun, looked down into the cove and the fields of home,—a deep bowl of soft evening shadows.

"Oh, my poor father," said Helen, changing. "I 'd forgotten his side of it." She paused, in a study. "You must n't come to dinner," she said. "Come in late, and make some excuse. I could n't carry it off with you there. Do go over the hill and see them fish. He has n't forbidden you." Her face was clouded at the prospect of deceit.

"I 'll go, then," said Archer, bitterly disappointed, and yet happy as a lord of the world. "But I can't stay."

"Oh, to-morrow," she called back from below, "to-morrow we must talk — a great deal. We must know each other first. But your ship?"

"I 'll go see the captain, and he 'll swear," said Archer. "There she is." And he pointed to the masts of a barkentine lying at a wharf in the distant town. "But she can sail without me," he laughed, and tossed his hand gayly in the air, snapping his fingers at the

mainland. Then he watched Helen, as she ran down the lower slope into the pastoral shadows.

He walked slowly over ledges and grass, the long shadows creeping to meet him. The sunlight stole upward, left his face, left the white birch tops, left the fir points, and was gone from the island. The breeze grew cool. And when he stood on the pink ledge above the downward pass to Black Harbor, lights already twinkled from the town, and the northern headlands were black against the afterglow. He stood looking for a while, his joy quiet and deep. Yesterday, and the two years before, he had been a cheerful runaway, letting money and goods lie fallow ashore, rejoicing in bare, hard life and in youth. He had come over to this island to fill an idle day or two, — and here was Helen, — and in the twinkling of an eye life had changed, had grown more complex, serious, yet strangely fortunate. He had given some fugitive thought to such matters. "But I did n't

know it would be like this, exactly," he said to himself. Always before he had craved to have things go swiftly ahead, event succeeding event while his mind still tugged forward to the future; but now a little pause in the present, a breathing-space to look happily about in, was his sole desire. It was only his promise to Helen that made him renounce the temptation of smoking his pipe and thinking there on the summit, and go slowly down through the black firs.

For the first few steps he could look down the evergreen glacier, miles down, it seemed, upon the dimly shining harbor, two or three boats at anchor, the dark curve of the bar, and a sombre headland along which a single belated gull went winging swiftly. Then he was immersed in darkness. As he stumbled downward he found his thoughts strangely mingled: Helen with her shining hair confused somehow amid a newborn pity for her father, a new inquisitiveness as to his life and the lives of others, the man with the blue-veined forehead, his pert little brother, the fishermen silent in their cups. "He must

have had a hard deal sometime, her father," thought the young man; "and the others, too." Last night they had seemed mere figures in the darkness, the pawns in a game of adventure, the "persons who do not count." To-night he would like to learn more of them.

In this friendly spirit he finally broke into the open, on the hillside behind the huts. The barroom, as he passed, was lighted, but empty, save for the little man waiting before his bottles. Archer went on, through the stink of fish among the gray huts, down to the beach; and here he came upon small groups, some twenty men in all, smoking, talking, and looking down over the long slope of wet pebbles and seaweed to where a few boats waited at the water's edge.

One of the groups he joined, with an odd reluctance. They peered at him through the dusk, with perhaps a little surprise, then smoked and spat in unconcern. They were sober to-night. By their faces — all dark and thin, some vicious, some dull — they were simple men enough, quiet, ordinary, and poor.

"Wha' d' ye git under-runnin' yer trawl, Kellum?" one asked finally, between puffs.

"Nothin' but hakes and skates," answered a sad-faced little old man, whom Archer recognized as the dulse-gatherer of the night before. Back into his yellow-stained beard he thrust his pipe, like a stopper to his mouth.

"I seen him knockin' 'em off," said a young man, with a loud, empty laugh. Then conversation flagged.

"The' must 'a' been thirty-five bar'ls in the Grab-All to-night," said the first speaker. "She did n't hold a tubful o' herrin' last tide. They 're comin' in, I tell ye."

"Thirty-five berrils!" twanged a Yankee voice. "They was forty in that wyre if they was a fish. They 're thick as fiddlers in Tophet."

"Well," replied the other peaceably, "we 'll git some more this flood, spudgin', anyway."

Silence fell again.

"Cap'n Kellum, you was sayin'," ventured another, as if resuming a debate which Archer had interrupted, "you was sayin' that the Regina had a centreboard. Now

that 's no kind o' use on a schooner. She 's too big a bo't."

"Too big a bo't fer you, 'cause you 'd knock the bottom out of 'er," retorted Kellum placidly. "Some men is proper fools about bo'ts, if they hev been out from Gloucester."

"Haw, haw!" the loud young man shouted in ecstasy.

"That shows how much ye know," the old one went on, suddenly excited. He took out his pipe, and argued with bent fingers pegging at his opponent in the dusk. "The longer yer bo't, the more wood ye got at each end o' the hole to keep 'er solid. The Regina, — if I had the money to buy 'er back, I 'd not stay in this stinkin' cove, — why, I see 'er comin' out from Freeport with 'er centreboard down, an', by Godfrey, she 'd go like a horse !"

"Yeah, she 'd go like a horse," assented the Yankee. "That 's right."

Another listener wagged his head. "She would, too. She 'd go like a horse."

The loud young man laughed again. "I

seen 'er," he echoed. "She 'd go like — like a horse."

This simile exhausted by popularity, the group was silent once more, with pipes glowing in the dark. A bent figure slouched past them down the beach.

"Hey, Mulb'ry," some one called after it. "Goin' out a'ready?" There was no answer. "Mulb'ry 's sore 'cause he did n't git all that bottle o' gin las' night," mocked the Yankee.

Another figure tramped down through the pebbles.

"Muckahi!" came a yell from a neighboring group. "Sebattis, ain't you got that bo't down yet?"

The soft voice of an Indian replied. With quiet command of the vernacular, he advised his questioner to go deeper than Purgatory. Old Kellum straightened his curved shoulders.

"Sebattis," he shouted, "you go git that bo't off 'fore I give ye a lift."

There came the hollow grating of a boat pulled down to the water. "That Injun 'll be takin' charge round here," growled Kellum.

Other figures went crunching downward through the dark, till the footsteps glimmered with phosphorus on the distant seaweed. A newcomer joined the group. "Here 's Blue Peter," said the Yankee.

"I was puttin' another bow on my dip-net," explained the deep voice of Archer's young friend. The net, on its long pole, stood high above his head, like some drooping standard obscure in the starlight. "Beaky's b'ot 's off a'ready," he added, "an' Joe's, an' Benny's."

The men started down the beach.

"Can I go out with you, Peter?" asked Archer, on the impulse.

The reply came in an odd tone of surprise mingled with something else.

"Oh, that you, sir? Yes, sure, if you'd like." As Archer slipped his money into his shirt, and threw his coat on the beach, he wondered at the touch of respect.

They trooped down together. Under the heavy boots, glow-worm drops of phosphorus filled the wet seaweed with spreading blots of brightness. To the "chock-chock" of oars on thole-pins, some half-dozen boats

were already crowding out through the gap in the sea-wall, every keel a running line of blue-gold fire. Among the half-dozen more which now put out, Archer found himself in the bow of Peter's roomy skiff. "Let me row," Hippolyte had begged. So the youngster pulled out ably, while Peter sat in the stern. Liquid gold dripped from the oars; fan-shaped clouds of blue-gold smoke swept astern with each pull; and to Archer, in the bow, seeing the dim shining of the oarblades, the bright arrowhead of ripples that spread from the cut-water behind him, it seemed that they must be rowing forward into the lights of a great town. So strong was the delusion that he turned his head, and was surprised to find only the looming of the sea-wall as the boat slipped through, the blackness of the ocean outside, the running lines of golden fire under the other keels.

Their small flotilla moved somewhere to the southeast, hugging the shore under the cliffs, skirting the bunts of a weir or two, rugged blacknesses picked out with lapping phosphorus round the foot of the poles. A

deep, irregular drumming started up ahead, like horses running confusedly across a bridge, or empty trucks rumbling over a stony road.

"What 's that?" said Archer.

"They 're spudgin'," replied Peter, from the stern. "Show him, boy."

The youngster began jumping his oars about on the gunwale. The boats astern took it up, till the wide air rumbled with the heavy drumming and the echoes of the cliffs.

"It 'll make 'em rise," Peter explained. "You take the oars, sir, and Hippolyte, you come down stern here. I'll go in the bow."

They crawled past each other over the thwarts. Archer soon caught the knack of drumming and rowing by turns. The boy pounded the sides with both fists.

"See," called Peter suddenly. "There 's some."

The water was stirred into millions of tiny golden globules; golden streaks shot in crisscross multitudes, like tiny comets smothered in deep sea. Peter plied his dip-net swiftly. With a swash and a thump, some

half-barrel of herring fell aboard, in a writhing, flipping heap, alight with phosphorus.

More splashing, and a few more tumbled in. "'T won't do," grunted Peter. "Not 's many 's they seem. Head 'er out again, sir. They 're tryin' to drive 'em — with the torches."

Archer turned the boat, and pulled out to sea, until the order came to turn again.

"I 'll light the dragon," said Peter. "This is against the law, ye know, sir, but the law ain't got 's long an arm 's they say."

With a crackle of birch-bark and the smell of burning kerosene, a light flared up as if their bow had been on fire. Other torches flared far along the water, coursing shoreward till the giant shadows of men and rocks tossed and swung high on the dim red crags.

"Keep 'er headed just as she is," commanded Peter. "Now pull like the devil, sir."

Archer obeyed till the sweat trickled down his forehead. "A little faster, sir — a little

faster"— his captain kept urging; and Archer tugged with all his young muscles. Other boats flamed alongside of them. "We 've caught up, going famously," he thought.

Just why it happened he never could have told. Suddenly a torch-lighted bow swerved astern of them, — nearly ran them down; and he saw above the smoky flame the goblin face of Beaky Lehane, — the flat, cartilaginous nose, the wide-spaced teeth, the evil little eyes, a face distorted in a mania of drunken passion.

"Git out o' my way!" he raved, with a fierce oath.

The boy in the stern half rose in terror. Behind the grinning face a hand left the pole of a dip-net, and tried to catch Lehane by the shoulder. But in the same instant he swung out savagely with the torch. The iron-shod stake crashed down on the head of the little boy, who fell with a kind of whimper into the bottom of the boat. Archer, rising in a rage, heard Peter roar at his back, and felt him leap astern. But he himself had the better place, and swung the oar like

an axe with all his strength. It struck Lehane with a wooden resonance and a tingling shock that ran through Archer's forearms. Both boats upset in a souse of phosphorus.

The water was shockingly cold. Squirting a salt and golden jet from his mouth, he looked about. Two black hands, the fingers spread stiffly apart, sank in the boiling witch-fire. They were too large to be the boy's. Next instant he bumped into Peter, whose face was smeared with an unearthly glow as if rubbed with wet matches, and who held the little body under one arm, while he lashed out the other through the blue-lighted spray.

"No, no!" gasped Peter. "You can't help! Swim ashore! I've got him. They can all swim. Get out! Swim to the ledge, anyway. Go on, man. Oh, my God!" He was sobbing as he swam.

Archer could see other men splashing lustily away in luminous patches.

"It 's every man for himself," he thought, and struck out vaguely for the shore. Through the cold, shining water he swam, through

shoals of fish quick and startling to the touch, and at last pulled himself out, shedding glow-worm drops, upon the round stones of the sea-wall. Here he waited. But by the torches, the other boats seemed to be looking for something. He dimly saw men pulled aboard, and still the search went on. No one came to join him. Then he remembered a little ledge offshore, bare at low tide. The others must have swum to that. He grew very cold as he waited; still the torches hovered aimlessly in the distance; and at last, with teeth chattering in the night air of autumn, he clambered over the breakneck stones, followed the inside curve of the wall, until, after many falls and infinite groping, he stumbled upon his coat. Carefully drying his hands in the beach-grass, he hunted matches out of the pocket. Old grass, broken fish-flakes, and cedar shavings from weir-poles, soon snapped and blazed on the pebbles. He sat drying himself as well as might be, and waited for news of this sudden and strange mishap. He was uneasy over the stroke he had dealt with the oar; yet

the thought of the little boy braced his conscience at the same time that it made his heart sink.

In these thoughts by the fire, growing warm and sleepy, he was startled by a growling voice.

"Who the hell are you, buildin' fires on my beach?" The speaker was a man of middle height, prodigiously broad and bulky, with a wide red face in which the eyes were so staring and the big red nostrils so far apart that he had the aspect of a bull. As the question came rumbling again in a thick bass, Archer noticed that the hands, in the firelight, were fat, freckled, and immensely powerful, like the hand thrust in at the barroom door. This, then, was the Old Man, and, by the resemblance to the face at which Archer had swung his oar, it was Beaky Lehane's father.

"Oh, go to the devil," he answered, too cold, and tired, and bitter to let any man stare at him so. "This is n't your beach, anyway. It 's Mr. Powell's. Go stare at somebody else."

"Well, by the"— wheezed the man, and stopped, cut speechless by wonder and rage. Then the hulking body lurched nearer.

"Look here!" cried Archer, jumping up and shaking his fist. He had lost his temper, as in a bad dream. "Be off with you! This is my beach as much as yours, if it comes to that. I've lighted a fire, and I'm going to sit alone by it. Alone, do you hear? You 're only a squatter. Well, here I squat, too. You 'd better go look after your son, — he 's got himself into a pretty mess, and serve him good and right!"

He expected that on the heels of this they would be rolling down the pebbles in a clinch. Instead, the big man breathed hard with a startled puff, and asked anxiously: —

"Where? Where is he? What was it?"

"Oh, over there," said Archer wearily, pointing by guess toward the foot of the cliffs. "Been a fight — overboard — I don't know, go look for yourself."

The man reeled off into the dark. Archer was so tired that he merely felt relieved, as from a bore. He piled the fire till it blazed

high, dried himself fairly well, and waited sleepily. Still nothing appeared from harbor mouth or sea-wall. Suddenly it flashed through his drowsy brain that he was expected back at Powell's that night. This bit of civilized obligation came like something laughable, out of some other person's life. It was in a droll dismay that he hurried off up the hill.

Once, through a gap in the black layers of the fir branches, he caught the shine of lights far below. "Let them go till morning. I 'll be back," he thought. Perhaps the little boy was not hurt so much, after all. Like one in a heavy dream he climbed wearily over the hill and downward through starlit fields to the house.

A candle, burning low, waited for him in the little brown hall. He locked the door without a sound. "What a mess for a visitor!" he pondered ruefully. But the thought that Helen was in the same house, even though she were asleep, came to him like a comfort.

VI

All night a land-breeze swept overhead from the north, as if streaming down an interminable valley. Despite his weariness, he slept ill; his dreams were a riot of pictures, — the firs, the gulls, the witch-fire, Helen looking away from him at the sea, the boy rising, in fear, against the torchlight,— and through it all a troubled half-remembrance of the blow he had struck with the oar. When he woke, at sunrise, the wind had fallen. The house still lay drowned in sleep. He dressed, stole downstairs, and looked about for his cap, which he had left there two nights before. It was not to be found. He did not know then that Helen had taken it to her room, laughed and cried and committed pretty follies over it, and at last gone to sleep, intending to leave it in the hall before he should be up. So he went outdoors bareheaded.

The wind had swept away with it all vestiges of summer, and brought in a pure dawn of uncompromising autumn. The night had drawn a sharp line between the seasons.

The air was crisp and chilly; gossamer-films of frost silvered the grass; and round the upper outline of the headland that shut off the south and east, a faint, cold smoke rose in the first warmth of morning. What remained of sky and sea was a dull sepia touched with flakes of pale yellow.

Climbing over the fields to the pass, he was aware that some one sat waiting for him on the edge against the sky. He climbed faster. The figure resolved itself into the lean, solid body of Peter, his blue jersey, his heavy rubber boots rolled down below his knees in the fashion of some uncouth cavalier.

"How is he?" called up Archer. "How did it come out?"

The blue eyes under the blue-veined forehead looked down gravely, as Peter shook his head. Even through the dirty growth of beard, the lines of his face were hard and old. With fears suddenly full grown, Archer sprang upward and stood before him. Something made him wait for the other to speak.

"It 's bad," said Peter, at last. "Bad;" and he stared out over the fields and the channel, like a steersman, who has the air of listening to talk in the boat while his eyes look miles out to sea. Then he said abruptly, "The boy 's dead."

"Oh, Peter!" cried Archer, and was struck dumb. "Oh, my God, I 'm sorry — I 'm sorry for you." He could find no words, but the tone must have meant something, for the other suddenly lost his set composure, and covered his swarthy face and blue-scored forehead with his hands.

"I knowed you was a good feller all right," he said brokenly.

For a time neither spoke. It was Peter who began.

"I was up on the cliffs yesterday afternoon," he slowly declared, "and saw you. She heard me in the trees"—

"What!" cried Archer in surprise. And then with disappointment, "Well, I did n't think it of you, if "—

"Why," said the other, once more gazing off before him, "how was I to know, then?

I had n't no means o' tellin' for sure that you was any diff'rent from the others"—

"Others!" Archer exclaimed, hotly and yet with wonder. "There are n't any others. That 's a lie. There never were any."

The blue eyes looked squarely at him, deep, with a weary brightness.

"Oh, yes, the' was," the fisherman replied. "The' was one other. Wait!" he added sternly. "I 'm slow at these things, but you'll ketch my drift. It's eight years that I've kep' an eye on her. Beaky was round after her. She never knowed it. The' was a girl ashore, over in town, he got after, that — Never mind. That was n't goin' to happen here, if I c'd stop it. I 've licked Beaky twice; and so long 's he was on the island, I never left it, — never, for all his old man ordered me off. Don't ye see? When she 'd go round down there all alone, playin', — God, I've knowed 'er longer 'n you, anyway, — or up on the head — why, I was always round, spyin' out. Why, man, that 's only why I stayed here." He looked down and fumbled with the dirty cloth lining of his

boots, in a pathetic kind of bashfulness. "I 'd never 'a' told this to a soul, but I see you was all square — an' meant right by 'er — an' how it was between ye. Well, she 's never come to harm, an' 't was me that had the hand in that." He ground both fists between his knees, with the effort of expressing these long-stifled thoughts. Then he looked up once, in the pale light of sunrise. "I 'll ask ye to take that back what ye said about lyin'."

"I beg your pardon," said Archer, deeply humbled. "I took it wrong. I did n't understand all this. I beg your pardon."

"That 's all right, then," he answered simply. "Now to come to the point. The' 's no time to lose. Beaky Lehane 's paid for it. He 's gone."

Sunlight, ledge, black firs, and circle of air, looked pale and sickly round Archer. He thought he could not have understood.

"You don't mean"— he began weakly, trying to stave off what he knew would be the truth.

"Yes," said Peter. "They found him 'bout four this mornin', on the beach."

Archer, wrestling with this thought, found that the fisherman had risen and was patting him roughly on the shoulder. "That 's all right," he was saying. "Don't look so cut up. That 's all right. 'T was n't you. He started out drunk — jus' got drowned, that 's all. You did n't no more 'n give him a clip on the shoulder, jus' bruised him. That 's straight. If ye had n't, I'd 'a' given worse to him. An' if ye had done it, I 'd 'a' owed ye one. He 's a good riddance. Don't ye see, sir, he was crooked, bad clean through. It 's better for her now that he 's gone. Don't take on, now. 'T was him that killed the little boy."

Archer was ashamed that he could receive better comfort than he had given this man. He pulled himself together.

"You said there was no time to lose," he ventured, remembering dizzily. "Well, what 's to be done?"

"That 's it!" cried Peter, with bitterness. "What? It 's a bad business. Matt Lehane — the old man — they told 'im it was you that done for Beaky. He thinks it was

about her — the girl. He 's down there ever since, holdin' a reg'lar devil's wake over 'im — it — there. An' drunk! Lord! But he don't lose his legs, nor his head; the drink jus' sharpens 'im. Well, he'll git 'em all drinkin', — likely he 's started that by now. Then he'll bring his gang up over here; it 's you he 's gunnin' for, but I won't answer for what'll happen at Powell's, when they git started. It 'll be a pretty crowd. An' here 's you an' me, an' old man Kellum, — an' p'raps Benny, — an' for a long guess Sebattis, — 'cause Beaky was always cuffin' 'im round, — if he don't git drunk first. 'T won't do. 'T ain't enough of us. He 'll git fifteen or twenty, — the devil's rinsin's they are, too."

"I'll go down and see him," said Archer. "That 'll keep them away from the house. I 'm not afraid of him, I hope." And he told briefly of the encounter by the fire. "He did n't seem so terrible."

"That may all very well be — for last night," declared Peter, his blue eyes alight with keen thought. "He 's rotten, an' a brute, but you must remember the' was

jus' one good thing in 'im, he thought the world o' Beaky. He 's the only one to do that. Oh, I tell ye he 's a devil anyway, an' worse when he 's drunk. They 'll be too scairt not to foller 'im, anywheres he says. That 's all that kep' 'em together as a gang. No, 't would jus' be murder if ye went down there now; an' you can't be spared. An' I 'm not guessin' about this, for I went round, quick, too, to sneak a bo't, — mine got lost last night, — an' blessed if he ain't stole every pair o' oars out of every bo't. An' if we had 'em, it 'ud be no go, 'cause Benny's bo't 's lent to his brother to go after smokewood, an' Kellum don't even own one, — poor old feller, he useter own a schooner once. An' the' ain't a stitch o' canvas on them pinkies. Oh, the Old Man 's cute! He don't mean to have you git off this island. When he gits 'em lo'ded, he'll go up to the house, an' whether you 're there or not, they 'll raise hell! An' now how 'll we stop 'em? We ain't got no guns. But the' 's axes an' bo't-hooks," he cried savagely. "We'll do for some one 'fore we git laid out."

"Powell let his boat go adrift last spring," Archer reflected, with bitterness. "There 's just one way to get help. Swim it."

"By the Lord!" cried the other, astonished. Then shaking his head, "Can't live in that cold for two miles an' a half. An' it 's slack water now. By young flood it 'll be the whirlpools."

"We must try it," said Archer. "It 's been done once, years ago. I must take the chance. You delay them down there."

Blue Peter thought for a second, then nodded grimly. "You 're all right," he said. "I 'll put a spoke in his wheel. You 're all right. 'T won't be no easy job for 'em." He hesitated. "Look here, somethin' may happen. After this is over, — if she comes out of it all right, — I 'm off for good, anyway. Nothin' left on this island for me. The poor little kid — he was what you call a — what is it? — massacree? no, they useter tell about 'em out o' the Bible — 'sacrafice' the word? Well, he was bein' spoilt here in this crowd. Might 'a' gone to school an' learnt somethin'; but I kep' puttin' it off — usin' him to

help me keep an eye out — he 'd lie up here watchin', whole afternoons. Might 'a' done better 'n me, nearin' thirty an' good for nothin' but fish. I want ye to promise me one thing," he jerked out. "Quick, 'cause we 've been standin' here talkin' too long."

"I'll promise it," said Archer.

"Don't tell her — Helen," said Blue Peter, looking down, "none o' what I told ye — 'bout me or the boy — an' our doin's. I knowed some one 'ud come along like you — I ain't a fool. Just you promise that."

"All right, then," said Archer. Suddenly he held out his hand. "Peter, you 're the best fellow I ever knew anywhere."

Their grip was strong but brief.

"I wish we 'd 'a' growed up together — Hugh," said the fisherman. "Now hurry. Swim the best ye know how. I 'll hold on till you get back. That 's my promise, for yours. I 'll hold 'em."

He went scrambling downward to his desperate politics. Archer bounded off down the slope, through the field and the frost-bitten rows of vegetables, to the back door.

The good old woman was lighting her kitchen fire. He cut short her wrinkled smile of welcome.

"Barbara," he said, snatching a bottle of oil from her shelf, "I must frighten you a little, but you must stand it, for Miss Helen's sake. There 's danger from that crowd over in Black Harbor. Just how much I can't say. I 'm going across to the town, and bring over some men to see no harm 's done. But meantime, you must keep the house shut up, tight. Don't let them go out, or any one in."

The old woman's face looked very white, but there was pluck in her eyes.

"It 's for Miss Helen's sake," he repeated. "Keep up your courage. I 'll be back."

"All right, Mr. Archer, sir," she faltered. "I 'll do it, sir."

He was off, running to the beach, and along it northward, to make his start as far as possible above the line where the whirlpool might appear. Ripping off his clothes, he ran naked down to the water's edge, doused the oil over his body, and rubbed

hastily till the great white muscles glistened in the sun. He felt hollow from lack of food and sleep; the water stretched hopelessly far to the mainland; but the excitement as he ran splashing out, and the cold shock of the plunge, set his heart thumping stoutly. His first thought was one of despair, —"It 's too cold." But he shut his mind to that, and clove his way ahead through the bright green water, swimming with a powerful side stroke. That lowness of vision over a flat surface which is peculiar to swimming made colors and lines abnormally distinct. With his cheek gouging through the water, he could see the ruddy cliffs retreating behind him, the greenness and the black shadows of little trees that clung in crevices, the pink curve of the beach, the shining, shifting lines of the water, his own legs, distorted by refraction till they looked ridiculously pale and green and thin, kicking away like alien marine things in pursuit of his body and of the big, glistening deltoid that capped his shoulder, strongly contracting and relaxing. Ahead, as he shot his arm forward, appeared

his first distance mark, a white can-buoy two thirds of the way across the channel; beyond that, a broad eddy of the tide, a slightly raised surface, smooth and yellowish-white, like a sheet of ice, where hundreds of white gulls wheeled or floated in search of breakfast; and beyond these again, the wharves and meagre shipping of the town, — the square-rigged shapely tangle of his own ship, the Elizabeth Fanning.

The numbness began to leave him, though an ice-cold ring circled his neck where wind and water met. Like all swimmers, he grew confused in his sense of time, and had strange thoughts. Halfway to the can-buoy now; no longer slack water; must hurry. A half-eaten apple came bobbing peacefully toward him on the young flood. He wondered who had eaten it, and whether it were sweet or sour. But where the devil had all his Latin gone to? Her father had said "enaviganda." Did that mean it could be swum through, or it could n't? He suffered a morbid worry over the meaning of this word, as if it contained the secret of his present fate. The thing had

been done — that fellow in '56. At all events, he shifted his stroke again, and swam on tediously.

Of a sudden he noticed that the apple was bearing rapidly down, — was alongside, on a little raised rim of water like a moving flaw in glass. Next instant he had spun about and was facing seaward. Something below twirled his legs violently.

"Hello!" he sputtered aloud. "Good Lord!" he thought. "This is bad. I must get out of this."

But the running ocean was stronger. The water hissed, curved on a slant, boiled upward, regurgitated in patches white as with melting snowflakes. A submarine force, gigantic and appalling, spun him round and round and whirled him downward. He wrestled frantically. His head sank inside a wide cylinder of smooth green glass, laced about spirally with running silver threads. His ears, long deafened by the noise of swimming, were filled with a strange roar. "Whirlpool! It's all up. I'll see where it goes to, anyway," he thought insanely, and strained

for a last breath as he shot under. In a green light he was slatted about dreadfully, spinning upright, then horizontal, his useless arms and legs flying wide and shaken. A giant weight, a personal, hateful weight, began pressing on his back, pressing him slowly down into the dark. Acute worry seized him because this thing was unfair — would not give him a chance to get just one more breath — was squeezing him down into a funnel, and he did not think the bore at the end was big enough to let him through. "Why," he thought, "why, this is It! This is dying. What they call Death! — I 'm very sorry for them all up there." And then he thought, as suddenly, "Hold on! I can't yet, because before this sort of thing I 'm due to come back to the island, — I 've drunk from her spring — Helen — that was the agreement"— But still he was pressed downward, and the pain grew heavy and dull. No one would ever tell her of the cold, the dark, the loneliness. It was all years ago, anyway, and very deep.

Slowly he was rising. "Where next?" he

thought cynically. Perhaps it was over now, and this was just the fellow's soul going up, up. "No, by golly, there 's too much pain about it. It 's lighter — The sun — It 's me, and I 'm out — Air!"

He struck out in leaden imitation of swimming, just to take it up where he had left off; then stopped; then began again. He was more interested in a pale thing that accompanied him, large and speckled, like a potato, but twitching round the edges, round the nostrils. "Why, it 's my nose, and I 've got one eye shut. How silly!" The humor of this woke him up, and now he really swam. "I 've wasted a lot of time down there," he mourned.

Something large, white, and round came rushing at him through the water. The can-buoy, — the tide was carrying him past, he must n't lose that. He lashed out for it blindly, and managed to be flung against the slope. Though it dipped, swayed, and rolled, he slowly climbed up, over barnacles and painted sheet-iron, to where he could grasp the iron ring at the top. It must have

been for a long time that he clung there. The tiny knives of the barnacles had sliced his legs, and blood ran in slow, red streams through the hair on his shins. "It 's all up," he reflected, watching the tide race by. "I 've come through the upper tip-edge of the whirlpools, off there. Just a baby one that got me; but it's done the trick. This is a mighty poor exhibition. What will Peter say, and Helen?" The only answer was despair; he grew colder and weaker, his aching fingers loosened, time dragged on, and he longed to go to sleep.

There came a puffing from somewhere. He looked up to see a smoky, brindle-colored tug off to the left, making for the town. He waved one arm, and gave a feeble hail. Nothing happened. He tried again and again, without much hope. At last she gave a short toot of her whistle, came about, headed toward him, turned near at hand, and stood off in a lathering wake. Two staring men lifted him precariously into a rowboat, and pulled back through the sweep of tide.

"How many men have you got aboard?" he kept asking, as plainly as he could for the chatter of his teeth.

"He 's bughouse," flatly asserted the man at the oars. "'Lord, he 's blue as my shirt. Git him down into the engine-room, Spike, an' give him a slug o' whiskey. — What 'd ye try to swim it fer? — No use askin', he 's bughouse."

Then all that Archer remembered was being lowered into the warm depths of the tug, and standing before the red blaze of the furnace door, with the water forming inky puddles round his feet in the coal dust. And the deck-hands choked him with vile Irish whiskey. Then he found himself talking lucidly with a fat, jovial, and astonished captain, and, by a last effort of the will, making him understand that he, Archer, this naked swimmer, could pay a hundred dollars to have a posse of men taken over at once to the island. And then they had touched at a wharf, where dozens of men had sprung aboard, shinning down the slimy green spilings. The tug was off again. The

engineer gave him cotton waste to rub down with, and dressed him in a blue jumper and overalls. They sped past the can-buoy again, where already the whirlpools had vanished in the tide. Throughout this dream every one was wonderfully kind to him, and seemed to think him a decent fellow, somehow. The captain introduced him formally to Sheriff Moriarty, a keen, elderly man with a gnawed mustache, who asked many questions briskly, and kept repeating, "Always said so. Knew something of the kind would happen. Old man Powell 's a fool. I knew it." And then in admiration, "Young man, there 's few could have swum to that boo-y at any time of tide."

Yet all this was unreal; it was only when they steamed into the cove, and could see the close-shuttered house, that men and things seemed to Archer more than a tangled farce of dreams. Three boatloads pulled quickly landward. But as they rowed, Archer saw a little squad of men appear over the slope, running toward the house; and a man in a blue jersey was running with the

first of them. The island was very still in the growing warmth of late forenoon.

VII

The battering of blows on the door came down to them while they struggled up the sand, more boatloads racing after them; but when they reached the field, they saw the little mob still outside, swarming like hornets round the doorstep. Something had checked them: there was a surge of conflict, but no advance. As the townsmen ran up the slope, two figures rolled down past them, — the dark Indian face of Sebattis, who was trying to bite a white man's ear, — both growling and punching in a drunken dog-fight entirely beside the point of the main quarrel. Some of the less eager among the sheriff's men stopped to separate them, but Archer and the others swept on. Already a few of the gang scattered from the door in flight, running unsteadily round the house and up through the vegetable garden. One man fell blindly through the beanpoles, with loud

oaths and breakage. Those who stood their ground had their backs turned, and were apparently absorbed in something before them.

While he raced, Archer saw what it was. Before the broken panels of the door old Lehane and Peter stood in a clinch so desperate that the rest had fallen back to watch them. Even in the heat of running Archer could see the wrench of muscles under the blue jersey of the one and the coat, green with age, that covered the broad back of the other. Peter, with both hands aloft, gripped Lehane's wrist so that a pistol pointed skyward; but round his own throat a great, fat hand was murderously at work. Both bodies, the lithe and the bulky, were strained to the last fibre.

"Old fool!" grunted Peter. His eyes were almost shut against the sun, the blue veins showed like a Biblical seal on his forehead. "Quit it!" A sudden ripple of tense motion ran through his body from boot-heel to wrist. There was a sound like a stick snapping.

"Ah!" bellowed the big man. The pistol

fell. Archer and the others breasted the bright surge of flowers in the garden, and ran upon them all in a victorious scuffle. It was more than two to one, and with old Lehane surrounded, the fight was laughably simple.

Archer found himself shoving off an over-zealous deck-hand who would have seized Kellum. The old man sat against the red stone wall, his little knees drawn up with a comical air of comfort, but a red stream from his cheekbone trickling into his yellow-stained beard.

"He hit me a proper hard poke," he was muttering, dazed but philosophic. "It could n't 'a' come square on, though."

Helen appeared from somewhere with towels, a basin, and a bottle. Her brown eyes sought Archer's for one bright instant, and then she was at work over Kellum, deftly and sensibly. The old man looked up at her like a dirty, bearded child.

"Ye done well, Hugh," said the deep voice of Peter. The two big men grinned at each other like schoolboys. Peter was breath-

ing short, and wore round his throat the red stripes from the old man's fingers. "To speak plain, ye done better 'n I thought ye could. 'T was an awful resk."

"I have n't done so much as you," replied Archer. He meant far more than this, for new and strange thoughts had been swarming in his mind through all this tumult. "Nothing like, Peter."

Both men had stopped smiling.

"It was both of us, — both fer the same thing, anyway," the fisherman said. "'T was a narrer squeak," he added, with forced cheerfulness. "We had n't ought ter complain, 'cept fer the boy." He turned away slowly, and walked a little distance down the field, where Archer did not follow him. In the mean time Helen had disappeared.

Farther down the slope old Lehane was raving in the midst of a group. "Leggo, damn ye, my arm 's broke, — no need o' grabbin' that way. That 's the feller, up there, — the red-headed one in the overhalls; he done fer Beaky, I tell ye."

"That 'll all come out at the inquest,"

Sheriff Moriarty called down to him. "Take him over to town and get his arm set," he ordered, and came stalking upward to engage in conversation with Mr. Powell. The scholar had now ventured out, pale and bewildered, into the sunlit flower garden; and over the tangle of sweet peas Archer could see him shaking hands timidly with the sheriff, like a mild curate receiving congratulations on a discourse. The sheriff was introducing several other men.

"Mr. Powell," he said briskly, "I want you to know my brothers, Mr. John Moriarty, and Mr. Michael, and Mr. Florence Moriarty; he 's a lawyer, sir, and may be able to help you about this matter of the squatting; and Mr. Hugh Moriarty, that I think you've dealt with in groceries; and Mr. Ferris, my half-brother, sir."

The pale little man shook hands very precisely, all round. "I am glad to meet you, sir," he repeated, without an inkling of what this intrusion from the great world was all about. "Ah, Mr. Ferris, — *non omnis Moriarty*," he chirped, and in spite of the blank

looks from the group of kinsmen, was visibly pleased with his joke.

Archer turned to Kellum. The old captain was not much hurt; in fact, after Helen's ministration he seemed almost neat, and looked up with sage and weatherbeaten resignation. They fell into the friendly talk of allies, in which Archer caught, by the light of many a homely phrase, glimpses of how Peter had played for time, played with craft and force, delaying, desperately delaying, the drunken crew in the harbor. Yes, it all strengthened what he himself had been thinking.

"He 's a good lad, Blue Peter," said the old man, stanching his cut with gingerly dabs of Helen's handkerchief. "We call him that for a joke. He 's a good lad, the only one o' the lot, an' he 'll be goin' away now, he tells me. He seems dretful cut up about the boy. Well, they 'll most all be goin' in a month, fer the winter. It 's only a summer camp, — 'cep' fer a few of us, the devil's orts, that has to stay all the year round."

"Captain Kellum," asked Archer suddenly,

"what would you do if you had your choice, instead of staying here?"

The little old sailor wagged his yellow beard sadly. "'T ain't no use talkin' so. But by the powers," he ejaculated, "if I had the money, I'd buy back the Regina. Lyons 'ud sell 'er; he wants a bigger bo't. Some fools 'll tell ye a centreboard schooner's no good," he cried, warming with enthusiasm. "But she, — I had 'er fourteen year, an' 'ud hev' 'er yit but fer bad luck, — why, she 'd go like — like a horse! The' ain't much left fer ye, my boy, when ye come to my age, p'r'aps. But I 'd ask nothin' better than jes' to come up on deck again on a winter mornin' and see where the vessel 's lyin'."

"If I buy her," said Archer, "will you take her and pay me a quarter of what she brings you in two years? She 's yours on those terms."

The old man's eyes peered at him, hard and bright at this cruel joke.

"Where 'd ye git the money?" he retorted.

"I 've got enough for that," replied Archer, laughing. "What do you say? I 'll get

Moriarty to telegraph Lyons to-day, when he goes over. You say he 'll sell. You can go aboard the first of the week."

Captain Kellum was astonished at this magic.

"Why," he faltered, "if ye mean it — 'T ain't a fair bargain to you, but if ye mean it"— His old face looked very queer and puzzled.

Helen was coming from the house.

"I mean it. Think it over," said Archer, as he moved away to meet her. By tacit assent they walked together apart from the groups of men, past the house, between the rows of frost-bitten vegetables. Her hair shone once more with bronze gleams in the sunshine. He felt infinitely glad to be with her again, as if he had come back to her after a long time and from a far country, — indeed, from the dark limbo of the farthest country, where time is unknown. She was good to look upon; he loved her with all his heart; yet what should have been happiness was overpowered with sorrow and self-reproach.

"Tell me," she asked in her quiet voice,

"what is it all about? I'm in the dark. You look so funny in those dirty things, and barefoot. What does it all mean — Hugh?"

He answered her smile at this first use of his name. Then very seriously he explained it all, — the fight in the dark, what he had done by water that morning, what Peter had done by land; everything save what his promise to Peter forbade him to tell. Her clear brown face was alight and alive with the swift-changing emotions. When he had ended this story of rough deeds, she was deeply moved and silent; but he knew she had acquitted him of his worst responsibility.

"But why," she asked in a puzzled way, "why did that old man think it started about me? What have I"—

She had gone so straight to the point that he was both amused and dismayed.

"You must n't ask me that now, Helen," he answered. "I've promised not to tell it all"—

"Not to me?" she asked, disappointed.

"Just that," he assented soberly. "Not to you." In the long silence he stooped and

plucked at the withered tops of potatoes. "Oh, Helen!" he broke out at last. "It 's that that worries me and makes me ashamed, — the promise, and a great deal more that I 've been thinking all the way over, through it all. I 'm ashamed. I came here," he hurried on breathlessly, "I came here and stole it from you, all at once, as if I 'd been the only man in the world, — or the best, — without giving you a chance, even, to know what the others were like — Oh, I 'm ashamed!" he cried. "It was like a cad, — it was n't fair to you, dear."

Her face had turned pale in the sunlight.

"Are you sorry?" she asked, with a cold voice that was not her own, and that did not conceal her distress and fear.

"No," he cried eagerly. "It 's the happiest and truest thing in my life. Oh, don't you see why? It 's just because it is n't fair to you. I wanted you to know that there were better fellows, off the island — and on it. Here goes my word!" he exclaimed in dismay. "I can't keep it. You said, the other time, that you never used to feel alone, — that

there was a kind of — of presence, you said, among the trees and places. Well, there was." And he told her all that Peter had said that morning. "There, I've broken my promise to him. But it's best. He's given up everything, thought, and care, and work, and his little brother, and I just came along and stole it. Why, Helen, you grew up in a kind of garden, — an enchanted garden you might have played it was, — and this man built and kept the walls round it, walls you could n't see. And what am I before a man like that? Just look, without any make-believe. We have n't even talked things over as we were going to this morning. But see. I've run away from everything — just drifted along — never thought much — took chances — only had good luck. Don't you see?"

She surveyed him oddly. In her eyes was a shine as of transfiguration, but he could not understand it.

"You're very young about some things," she said. "Younger than I — years. Did n't you see, up there — can't you remember — that our one look — and what it meant?

Did n't you see that it settled it all? I know there are other men, and noble and good — the world full of them — not getting their deserts — deserts much bigger than a girl like me. I know that. But what of it? This Peter, oh, I 'm sorry for him, and grateful, and he must be wonderfully good. But — don't you see?" she begged helplessly. "I can't explain — but if you don't — if you have the least doubt — then we 've made a mistake"— Her eyes shone pitifully and her lip trembled.

"Helen, you know I could n't," he said, frightened at the thought. "You know that. Why, when I was in the whirlpool, and it on my back — this Death your father spins words about — pressing me down, what do you suppose I thought? Just that I could n't die then, because the drink from your spring, — our poor little foolish game, lasting through it all, right to the end of everything, down there in the dark. Oh, just believe that! I can't explain, either, half of it."

The color of reassurance came back to her cheeks.

"Look," he said, pointing before them. They had come to the end of the shriveled rows, where a lane went by to the pastures on the northern headland. "This will help. See, this puddle of water here, where your cow 's been drinking. It 's full of her hoof-marks, and shallow, and dirty, and everything. Now stand over here."

Moving away, they leaned forward together and looked. The light so caught the little surface that the water was deep as the sky, and the clouds and the blue air were in it.

"There, you see. That 's my life, before you, and since. I don't know how else"—

The girl was the first to speak again.

"I can't tell you so well," she said. "But the long winter evenings with the snow against the panes, — and the summer nights and no one to talk to, — there 'll be no more of those." Then she changed, happily mocking his sober face. "Parables in puddles, — and a preacher in blue overalls." They both laughed.

"I know," he confessed. "But I 've been through something that 's made me preach

these things to myself. And two persons I met this morning, one on the island, and one in the water. — Let 's not talk about it. But I 'm not going to let things go to waste any longer, or run away. Old Kellum 's happy; there 's a beginning, and there are lots of chances. You 're at the bottom of it all. If we could only do something for Peter "—

Helen looked thoughtfully down toward the house and the cove.

"Poor fellow," she said at last. "I 'm glad you told me. I must talk with him, though it will be very hard for us both. Let 's go back now; and good-by, for a while, dear. Oh, you 'll tell my father soon, won't you? It 's best not to keep the truth hidden. Good-by. You 've no more doubts?"

"Not one!" he answered earnestly. "I wish I could do it for you — this"—

"No," she said. "You did your part this morning. There are other hard things that only a woman can do."

From the little flower garden, all crushed and torn with the recent scuffle, they saw the men moving away, part climbing the hill

toward the harbor, part returning to the beach. At the edge of the slope toward the cove, Peter, alone in the field, stood looking toward the mainland. Helen walked slowly down toward him.

Archer pattered indoors barefoot, and at the desk in the dark corner of the library began a letter.

"Powell's Island, Wednesday.

"To Captain Berry,

Barkentine Elizabeth Fanning.

"My dear Sir:

"An accident involving the death of two persons"—

Her father's commonplace book lay open before him. As he cast about for the right words, his eye lighted on a recent addition in the scholar's neat manuscript: —

"*Schopenhauer: Metaphysics of Love.*— This ablest of modern thinkers has said very wisely: 'And yet, amid all this turmoil we see a pair of lovers exchanging longing glances,— but why so secretly, timidly, and furtively? Because these lovers are traitors secretly striving to perpetuate all this misery and

turmoil that otherwise would come to a timely end.'"

"Hm!"— he pondered. "It seems her father may not need so much information as we supposed. She fails as an actress," he thought with joy. Then he took the liberty of closing the book and putting it away in the scholar's drawer, where Helen should not see the odious words. He sat thinking. "Old Lehane was not the worst person she must be saved from," he concluded.

Through the battered door she entered, her face streaked with tears. She went swiftly to the foot of the stairs, then turned, fled to him, and for an instant stood with her hands on his shoulders and her tousled head pressed against him.

"Oh, Hugh," she whispered. "He is a good man. And so were you to tell me. The little boy is to be — we agreed — up there by Arthur's cross. It 's little enough, is n't it? He is a good man."

She hurried from him and up the stairs. When her door had closed, Archer turned to the window, and stood looking out.

"I could punch the face of that ablest modern thinker," he said to himself. "For he 's a liar. Peter is worth a thousand of him."

Out on the pitch of the slope, the tall figure, black against the shining channel, stood looking off at the mainland.

"But sometimes," said Archer to himself, "we build our happiness at the expense of others"—

A footstep grated lightly on the stone, and the scholar entered, looking fatigued.

"Ah, Mr. Archer," he said kindly, "you two young men have done very well by us, it seems, in some mysterious way."

"Not I, sir," said Archer. "I only brought this trouble on you. I 'm sorry to give you all such a bad morning."

But his host's mind was already off the subject.

"I went down thinking to comfort that old fisherman about his son," he explained. "But I found it quite impossible, he is so violent in his grief. That was a fine saying of Solon's," he mused, "an heroic reply to the

news of his son's death, 'I knew that I had begotten a mortal being.' Or was it Anaxagoras, as some say, or Xenophon? But that is the pathos of the past; the truth of matters becomes obscured."

He looked very worn and white as he sank into the big armchair.

"He 's been through a good deal to-day — for him," thought the young man. "We 'll let it wait till to-morrow. I 'd better go down for my clothes before the tide gets them."

"Obscured or lost," added Mr. Powell. "And the future holds only one certainty"—

II

WILD JUSTICE

WILD JUSTICE

I

WEIGHING ANCHOR

It was in the dark, before dawn of a December morning, that Marden Sebright woke. Some vague stirring below had called him out of troubled sleep to a still more troubled waking. For an instant he lay staring at the faint blur of the window, aware only of that and of a world of unhappiness. Then he remembered. It was the last morning at home. His mother was up and about. He rose, ashamed, groped round in the dark, broke the ice in the tin basin on the stand, dashed the cold water over his hands, face, and head, fumbled into his clothes, and felt his way slowly down the narrow stairs that led between lath walls from the loft rooms to the kitchen.

"Good-morning, dear," said his mother's voice, as the door shut clinking behind him.

The room was lighted by one kerosene

lamp that burned pale and strangely yellow on the bare table near the window. In the white frost on the pane it had melted watery circles, through which shone the winter dawn, — the deep, sad, mysterious blue that is neither darkness nor daylight.

"Good-morning, mother," said Marden quietly. With his hand still on the latch of the little deal door, he stood looking at her. She had just taken a lid from the stove, and through the open circle below thin tongues of flame quivered upward, showing her plainly, — this little woman in black, with gray hair and gray eyes, who stood in the flickering light and smiled at him. She looked very beautiful to him then. And she must have looked so to others once; years ago she must have been an English "hawk blonde" of the gentler type, — a type that appeared with a difference in Marden's thin, fine features and bright gray eyes.

Now, as he stood looking at her, her eyes were large and shining.

"Why, mother," he said before he thought, "you have n't been crying, have you?"

She put the lid slowly back. Like all the other pieces in the top of the stove, it was bent and warped with age. It fell into place clattering. The fire crackled, and shone through the gaps and chinks in the uneven surface. Then came a silence, so long that while mother and son stood there looking at each other it seemed to Marden as if his words still sounded in the quiet room, and as if they had not been said gently enough.

When she spoke, her voice was quite steady, a sweet and level voice.

"Yes, Marden, I have been, a little."

"Oh"— he broke out, then stopped blankly, and turned to another question. "What did you come down and build the fire and do all these things for? You might have let me, this — this"—

"I wanted to do it for once," she said simply.

He crossed the room at a stride, and they kissed each other. There were no further words between them, and no further glances. But as they moved about the bare little room, bringing the knives and spoons and the cheap,

heavy dishes from the shelves to the table, they stayed very close together. It was meagre diet on the pine table, — a few slices of bread, two bowls of steaming oatmeal, and cold water in the clumsy cups that were meant to hold coffee.

As they sat down, Mrs. Sebright thriftily blew out the lamp, and left the room in dusk.

"The sun 's rising already," she said.

And indeed it was: through the watery circles in the panes they could see that the mysterious deep blue had gone, and that a gray light was slowly turning into day.

They both sat peering through the frosty window.

"Can you see her?" asked his mother.

Marden winced.

"No," he answered. "Not yet. But of course she 's still there."

Silence fell once more, while both made a pretense of eating. His mother was the first to speak again.

"It 's ten days to Christmas," she said, then paused, and then went on timidly, "Sicily 's

a long voyage. Remember about writing to me, won't you?"

"Yes, mother," said he; "I'll write on board, and mail it the first time we land."

"Lee said he would," she continued sadly; "and it's been ten years now without a word beyond hearsay. But you're not like Lee, dear."

"Lee!" cried the younger son in a hard voice. "Lee! O mother, if ever I meet him! — No, no, o' course I must n't — I would n't" —

"No, dear, you must n't. Lee meant — he's different. He's more like — Some men don't think much about such things!" She paused, and sighed. "When a boy goes out into the world, and to sea — Dear, you must never, never forget what I warned you against. It was so hard to tell you, but your father — poor John, I'm afraid he was n't always a good man."

"Always!" cried Marden, his cheeks glowing and his gray eyes flashing in the twilight. "Good! See where we are now, through him and Lee. Poor, and half-starved, and ragged,

and shivering, in this mean little dead town; and me having to go to sea to keep us both alive, and leaving you alone in winter!"

"Hush, Marden, hush," his mother said, and there were tears in her voice. "We must n't be bitter — this morning of all others. We ought to be glad, too, that Captain Harlow is so good to us, for if it was n't for him I don't know how we 'd weather through till spring."

Marden made some inarticulate sound. Then he fell to eating, as a lad of twenty must, in spite of sorrow. Slowly through the frosty panes came the first of the sunlight, and shone faintly upon the old shotgun and the powderhorn hung high on the wall behind the stove, and upon the picture below, — a picture stiffly daubed in blue, black, and white of "the Bark Gilderoy off Tristan da Cunha." Over these and a hanging bunch of last year's red rowan berries the light stole softly.

"Sunlight!" said his mother. "See now if she 's there."

They turned eagerly to the window, press-

ing their thumbs against the pane to make peep-holes in the frost that already had gathered white again. Outside, the snowfields and the stringy, shivering larch by the door were plain in the low-slanting light; then the ice and black open water of the bay, the island and its fir trees, and beyond, rising to the pale winter sky, the hills of the American shore, with broad fields of snow cut by fences that looked like black strings tied full of knots. In the middle of the bay was what they both had feared to see, — a gray old three-masted schooner, the Merry Andrew, lying at anchor.

"There she is," said Marden. "And see, she 's swung on her anchor-chains, and pointing bowsprit up-river. The tide 's going already, mother."

"They 'll be"—faltered his mother, "they 'll be — before long — Is your bag ready?"

"In the corner, all ready," he replied, pointing toward the door, where there lay a long canvas bag such as sailors carry, lumpy, dingy, bolster-like, and pursed at the top with a web of cords.

"Lee took your father's bag with him, you know," said his mother, evidently for the sake of saying something. "It was better than that one. It had 'J. S.' painted on it, — John Sebright, — and then underneath, 'Bark Gilderoy.' He had it all along, when we were both young and everything went well, — and later when we lost the Gilderoy — and all those downhill years; and he kept it after we had to stay here ashore. I wonder if Lee 's got it still?"

Marden was silent. He thought of his father seldom, and bitterly. But now it was with a touch of pity that he recalled him sitting in the big chair by the stove, — a hulking wreck of a man, broad, squat, with a great, hopeless face mottled in purple veins. He could almost smell again the rank pipe and ranker West India rum, and hear the growl of defeat from under the fierce white mustache, "Here we are in stays, by Christ, in stays, that 's where we are!" Then from this vision the lad looked across the table at his mother, gentle, gray-haired, smiling in her sorrow, and a wave of anger

rose in his heart, and was overwhelmed in a greater wave of pity.

"Oh, mother," he cried, choking, "you are — you are — in all the world"— His voice was stifled again. "If ever I 'm of any use in my life, it 's all — it 's all"—

He was on the verge of breaking down utterly; and no one can tell whether her bravery, great as it was, would have sufficed for both. But suddenly, in the tense quiet of the room, there sounded a knocking at the door that shut them in from the outside world. It was a strange series of raps, uncertain, hesitating, fumbling.

The woman's face grew very white. The boy pulled himself together, and rose.

"They 've come," he said. "It 's the Maltee."

The knocking sounded sharp on the frosty wood as he crossed the room. The door swung open, letting in a flood of freezing cold and of sunshine; and there on the half millstone that formed the doorstep was a little black ape of a man, in a blue reefer and teamster's cap, with gold rings in the stubby lobes of his ears.

"*Eccomi*," said this swarthy apparition. His bright little eyes looked up and down, up and down, quick and distressed, like a monkey's. "Time now. Alla-board. Ebba-tide. You come, by damn, we go."

Angelo the Maltese was never given a bigger part to play in this world than that of an incapable sea-cook and a distorter of the simplest messages; but now for one instant it fell to him to speak important lines in the obscure tragedy of the Sebrights. To them his faltering knock at the door had sounded like the thunder of the Commander's statue; his mumbling, broken English, the words of a Fate large, inexorable, and as cold as the wind that blew into the room from over the bay and the dazzling snowfields. But Angelo did not guess his own importance, for he remained cringing in the doorway, against a background of bright snow and black water, looking up and down, up and down with his troubled eyes, scraping and shuffling his heavy brogans on the flint millstone.

He pulled from the breast pocket of his reefer a dingy letter.

"*Alla madre.* Cap'na Harlow send. Pay —*un mese* — one mont' pay. You write gotta him?"

While Marden took his threadbare jacket and cap from the peg by the door, his mother, at the table, signed the receipt for twenty-five dollars, one month's pay in advance, on paper that was a blur before her brimming eyes. Her life, like that of many women, had been one of partings; but they were none the easier for that, and now it was as if she were selling her youngest son, who had never left her before, and selling him to go with strangers into a strange country.

Even Angelo with the monkey eyes did not see how they parted.

When the boy came out, he stumbled at the millstone step, to be sure, and the world of snow and sunlight reeled before his eyes; but his chin was high, the canvas bag rode light as a feather on his shoulder, and he swung so briskly along the narrow path in the snow that the Maltese had close work to follow with his sea-legs.

They were hardly down over the knoll

from which the gray cottage overlooked the bay, when a woman in black, with an old plaid shawl about her head, stole out of the door, and followed slowly along the path. She made no attempt to overtake the two men, nor did they look back. On the bank at the edge of the shore she halted, and stood watching them as, in the morning sun, they crashed their way down the beach, over ice thin as paper, that splintered underfoot and broke tinkling into broad plates for yards around, to show the gray pebbles or black mud-flats beneath.

Beyond the ice, where the water smoked in the sun, lay a ship's boat with a dark Italian sailor and a fat water-cask in it. Angelo hopped in lightly. Marden was about to follow, when he turned, and at the sight of his mother standing on the distant bank, started and made a step landward. There was a growl in the boat. He pitched the bag to one of the sailors, waved his cap in answer to his mother's hand, shoved off, and jumped into the bow. The boat turned, and pulled slowly away through the mist that from all

the open water rose like smoke, and drew slowly down with the tide. And through the smoke the heart in the boat and the heart on the shore were aching for each other across the growing distance.

The woman on the shore saw the boat pull under the stern of the gray Merry Andrew, and rise with a creak of tackle to the davits; saw the men going about the deck, black and small as ants; heard the chirrup of blocks on the headsails, fore and mainsail, and even, in the stillness, the clinking of the capstan pawls, till suddenly it was drowned in the half-hearted quaver of a chanty raised by Captain Harlow's Americans on board, heaving short: —

"Sometimes we 're bound for Liverpool,
Sometimes we 're bound for France;
But now we 're off for Sicily
For to give those girls a chance.

"Walk her round, boys-oh-boys,
We 're all bound to go.
Walk her round, my bully boys,
We 're all bound to go."

Then she saw the gray schooner wear round before a fair wind and tide, and, with the

peak of the dingy spanker crawling up against the snowfields of the American shore, draw slowly out of sight behind the evergreens of the island.

As for the boy, those few minutes were a dream in which he stumbled about the deck hauling on frozen ropes, and worrying that his mother should stand there so long in the snow before the house.

II

"YOUNG FLOOD"

Thus it was that the schooner Merry Andrew, of Hinkley, Maine, took on another cask of water, shipped a foremast hand to fill her crew, and was off for Sicily. Among the frozen islands and headlands of Etchemin Bay her master, Cyrus Harlow, steered her warily, and through the bold water under many an evergreen crag, till she won to open sea. With a good bottom, and a light cargo of shooks for orange-boxes, she rode handily out on the long swell of the wintry North Atlantic.

When a boy has been brought up at his

mother's side, — apron strings or not, — he is hardly at his ease among the rough men of a sulky and half-frozen crew, part Yankees who curse at him for a young blue-nose lubber, and part Italians who curse the less only that their teeth are chattering the more. But if a boy is quick with his hands, and stows his tongue, and looks at you with clear eyes that are not afraid, you can easily let him alone, or perhaps forget that he is on board. "A good enough lad," said the second mate, three days out. "No one minds the boy." And they let it go at that.

Of course the boy's heart ached at first, and sorely. The thought of what he had left behind, and how, and why, rankled in him for many a day, while he staggered about the slewing deck, or choked down Angelo's greasy food at the duskiest corner of the heaving table, or lay in his bunk stark awake and miserable, hearing the timbers creak and strain, watching the lamp swing the shadows across the roof of the forecastle, that was stifling with tobacco, and woolen socks steaming, and tar and oilskins, and the brute

smell of cooped-up men. But as his first seasickness quickly left him, who was son and grandson to English sea-captains, so his health and youth pulled him through the vast misery of the first longing for home. His conscience often upbraided him for his rising spirits. Of course he would not forget his mother and her loneliness. But then, there was so much to see and learn and live through! To sail southward in a vessel sheeted with ice; to beat dizzily and wearily all day into a blind whirl of snowflakes; on a calm morning to see the snow, that strange white creature of the land, so odd and out of place aboard ship, lying ankle-deep along the deck, or capping the deckhouse with a dome, or drifted over the anchor-chains, or caught like thistledown in the dirty fold of a frozen sail; and then, little by little, week by week, as the sun grew higher and warmer, to be sailing into spring weather, with the sweet smell of clean beech and maple rising from the hold, while the Italians thawed into laughter and left their reefers in the forecastle, till all the crew went about the deck

sweating, in their blue undershirts, with tattooed arms bare: all this, and the slow process of time on the ocean, the lazy afternoons on deck, the long yarns and longer silences by starlight, and at last the sight of the great rock Gibraltar rising vaguely ahead in a shimmer of brown morning haze, were enough to make the thoughts of a healthy boy fly forward rather than astern.

On the ninety-seventh day the Merry Andrew tied up at the long stone quay in Palermo, on the island of Sicily. Then there were stirring times. Captain Cyrus Harlow brought papers out of his cabin and went ashore, flushed with the new dignity of international affairs, blowing his great nose like a herald's blast before him. Angelo and the other Italians became mad creatures, and jabbered with gestures as of life and death among the stevedores who bundled the shooks up from the dark hole. And Marden loafed on deck with the Yankees, happy to watch these swarthy people work so fast in the heat that quivered on the quay, to admire the foreign city with its strangely fashioned

houses all of stone, to follow with his eyes the long line of the quay and breakwater, the dark blue platoons of soldiers drilling in a distant field, and the Conca d' Oro sheltering all in a semicircle of mountains. All the unaccustomed sounds and colors and smells of this, his first city, went to Marden's head. He was glad just to be alive, to lean over the rail and watch the giddy ripples of sunlight that the waves set shivering along the foot of the pier, or to gaze northward to where Mount Pellegrino overlooked the sea, or to whistle, or to shred a bit of oakum with his fingers, and all the while think of nothing. Such kinship had he with his brother Lee.

They stayed ten days at Palermo discharging. So Marden found time to wander through the streets, under the heavy balconies of the houses, past little half-hidden buildings older than the Saracens, and churches that reminded him of a picture in his Arabian Nights. At the Quattro Cantoni he lounged nearly a whole bright afternoon, looking down the long streets to the mountains and the sea. There were nights of shore leave,

too, when the sailors trooped along the quay in the cool of the Sicilian evening, and bought fruit dirt-cheap, and for ten cents a long-necked bottle of Italian wine.

"Why don't ye git some to take aboard fer goin' back?" they would sometimes ask Marden. And when he answered that he had n't the money to spare, "You 're too young to be so damn close," was their retort. For all that, it was a good-humored group of mariners that pushed along the streets, staring into the lighted windows, or at some pretty, dark Sicilian woman in a doorway. Yet always after a while the group mysteriously separated. The men disappeared, Marden noticed, alone or in pairs down some obscure side street, laughing loudly. Then Bunty Gildart, the second mate and a philosophical married man, took the boy carefully in tow, and they went back aboard ship together early.

"Ye see, boy," Bunty would say apologetically, as they two came along the quay together, "ye see, they has to be quiet ones in a crew, jest like everywheres else in the world, as a man might say." And he would wag his

colorless beard sadly, and halt, and look out over the harbor with something like a sigh. Then, changing the subject with laborious tact, he would exclaim, in the surprised tone of a good child, "This town 's got a pop'lation of three hund'ed and ten thousand!" or, "The old man tells me it 's only a fortnight to Jerusalem and all them holy places. Think o' that, boy!"

The crew came back at different hours after midnight, in different stages of disorder. Marden felt toward them an odd mixture of repulsion and envy, and was ashamed of something that he could not quite name.

On the last night ashore, however, a strange thing happened. The crew had halted before the mouth of an alleyway, and were looking in to see whether the fierce eddy of Sicilian men and women there meant a riot or a family rejoicing. Marden, on the outskirts of their own group, felt a plucking at his elbow, and turned to look down into the ugly face of Jerry Fox, with his harelip and bulging, frog-like eyes. The creature winked, beckoned, and then waddled off on his bowlegs round

the nearest corner. Wondering at this sudden and secret friendliness, the boy followed.

"See 'ere, podner," grunted the harelip, slipping his arm through Marden's and dragging him along the street, "the homeliest man in the crew 's got ter have the handsomest man fer ter tow alongside of. That 's a square deal, ain't it? And say, mate, I ain't a-goin' back aboard no more o' the Andrew. The old man makes me tired. Sick of him. I 'm a-goin' to duck out to-night. Don't say nothin'. But you come along fust an' I 'll show you a good time."

Before Marden could free himself, the misshapen creature had pulled him along, halted squarely in front of two women in a lighted doorway, and begun to address them in wonderfully bad Italian. At his words, and the sight of his froglike face, the older woman broke into clear laughter, that showed her white teeth and set her earrings swinging; but the younger, a mere girl, turned upon Marden a pair of dark, steady eyes, so large and starlike that the lad stood wondering, delighted, yet afraid. He would have given

worlds to know what to say to the owner of such eyes. But just then the rest of the crew, swinging noisily round the corner, with loud cries and laughter surrounded the two truants and swept them along. The rest of the evening went quickly, for they would have to sail for Trapani in the early morning; and after visiting a maze of wineshops, they all trooped aboard, laden with bottles, jugs, and small kegs, like pirates from the sack of a town. All but Fox: he kept his word and deserted, no one saw where; at which Captain Harlow swore next morning, loud and nasal, for several miles along the northern coast of Sicily.

From Trapani the Merry Andrew cleared with a cargo of salt for Boothbay, Maine. The voyage home was longer, and to Marden, whose thoughts were now homeward bound so fast, was tedious. Ten days out from Gibraltar they ran into a dead tropical calm, with the sun blazing down from overhead in intolerable heat, the deck like the top of a great stove, and the ocean dead and blank to the high, taut line of the horizon. All day long the tar dripped from the rigging like

raindrops on the deck, and the crew lay about as dead men.

When this had lasted nearly a week, and it seemed possible that the water might run short, there came a memorable night when a little coolness stole from somewhere over the blank ocean, and Captain Harlow allowed the Italian wine to be served out in place of water. The amount was moderate, to be sure, yet that evening the Merry Andrew was another ship, officers and men. Forward, from sunset till long after dark, there rose the merry sound of harmonicas, rough songs, and shuffling heel and toe. Aft, the captain — sun-dried Yankee as he was — relaxed to the extent of two bottles with the first mate, by lantern-light and starlight. Marden, who stood useless at the wheel, was forced to listen to the talk, which ran seriously upon Jerry Fox, and the causes of desertion in general.

"I 've seen men, Mr. Spinney," the captain said, with a vinous buoyancy in his voice, "I 've seen men go plumb to hellelujah over women that if they 'd 'a' brung me my food

to the table, I could n't 'a' eat it." Then, to Marden's surprise, the captain addressed him, turning so that the lantern-light threw a sinister shadow of his great nose across half his face. "Sebright," he said, speaking with fine irrelevancy, "I sailed under your father on the Gilderoy, and a sour man he was; but his wife was an angel, as we all knowed, at sea or ashore." He gave no explanation of this, but rising to his great height, and weighing the empty bottle in his palm, added, "They 's only two kinds o' women, Mr. Spinney, — they 's angels, and they 's brimstone devils." And he flung the bottle overboard, where it sank in a bright splash of phosphorus.

"They 's dummies, sometimes," replied the first mate sagely. But the captain did not hear, for he was clumping down into his cabin, to be alone.

Marden stood and wondered. Up forward, the reedy mouth-organ wheezed, and the heavy soles smote the planking faster and harder. But the boy was looking overhead, past the dim blackness of the topmast, into the

deep multitude of stars. He remembered having heard somewhere that Cyrus Harlow had married most unhappily. Then, all at once, while he was pitying the gaunt captain, he understood the mention of his mother, so that he wondered still more, and suddenly saw, as it were, further into her life, in clearer light and truer proportion, — its relation to other persons, dead, or mere names to him, its complexities, and its sadness. The thought of her now alone so long came with a new poignancy, making him astonished to recall that he had been sometimes happy on this voyage, forgetful in the pleasure of new sights, new experiences, and life at young flood. The starry eyes of the Sicilian girl shone in his mind, and he was strangely and bitterly ashamed. "That's like father or Lee," he thought, with swift disgust. "I won't take after them." On the heels of this a bit out of the Bible came to him. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" and he repeated it, looking up into the stars. "That's their kind," he thought, "father and Lee, — seeing things

for themselves everywhere, and not a thought or a worry." As for him, he would stay ashore at home after this, for good, and not care if he never saw a thing in all his days. And he would find something, make something, to work at for his living. He was eager to get home and begin. The situation there was bleak and desperate enough, to be sure; but as he thought it over and over, there seemed to be a chance of some kind, surely. The stars grew more friendly while he looked at them, pondering; the half-tipsy songs and shuffling became the music of the homeward bound; and when he turned in that night he lay in his bunk cheerfully figuring out his wages over and over.

It was late in July before the Merry Andrew lay off his native town, and sent him ashore in a boat, — to the wharf in the village, for there was not time to land him upon his own beach. The unpainted houses along the straggling main street seemed flat and small and widely spaced, the church steeple lower, after the cities he had seen. As they rowed in on the young flood, the distances

between old landmarks seemed to have changed, and the landmarks themselves to be the same yet not the same as before. In the hot noon stillness the village wore a blighted and ghostlike appearance. But the land breeze brought across the harbor the sweet smell of the Canadian fields of clover, still uncut and still blooming. And the boy, with his pockets full of money, and his eyes straining for a glimpse of the gray house on the knoll beyond the town, was on fire to be at home again.

Heber Griswold, their nearest neighbor, met him at the head of the slip as he hurried up, dragging his canvas bag.

"Hello, Heber!" called Marden, breathless and happy, and would have shaken hands.

Heber acted queerly, however, part offish and defiant, part cringing. He was in his best clothes.

"I seen the Andrew a-lyin' off there," he said in the tone of a set apology, "and I knowed you was a-comin' home. Ye see — ye see, Mard"—

But Marden had caught sight of some-

thing in his hand, something that he knew, — the brass key that always stayed in the lock inside the front door to the house.

"What are you doing with that?" he cried in the sharp voice of fear. "Is she away? Heber, is my — is she"—

The wharf tilted like a deck underfoot as he saw the man's face unmask and his eyes answer.

"Last April," faltered Heber, "last April it were — By God, Mard, I'm sorry"—

But Marden had snatched the key and was running down the village street, the canvas bag bobbing over his shoulder.

III

A DEBT TO MEMORY

He ran on blindly, through the street, and out through the fields knee-deep in timothy and clover. A few of the village people at their doors, looking curiously after the brown-faced young sailor with the wild gray eyes, knew him for Marden Sebright only when

they saw him scramble up the distant knoll to the deserted house.

Brushing through the rank chickweed that choked the path, Marden, still in a frenzy of haste, reached the door and thrust the key somehow into the lock. Then, as for the first time in his life he tried to unlock the door from without, it came over him suddenly that there was no use in hurrying so. Sick with despair, he stopped, and looked round him in a hateful calmness. He saw the windows, with the white shades pulled down, looking at him like blank eyes; saw the caraway weeds, the yarrow, the everlasting, and the red flowers of the tall London Pride, growing high and wild along the front of the gray shingles; felt the heat of noon beat down on the millstone doorstep; heard in the stillness the wiry hum of innumerable flies; and all was flat, and dead, and meaningless.

At last he opened the door. With bared head, slowly and quietly, as if coming into some dread presence, he entered, closed the door gently, and stood looking about him. The kitchen, with the white-shaded windows

dimming the sunlight, was cool and dusky. There was the familiar, indefinable smell of home, and his heart sank lower as he recognized it. A single fly buzzed on the pane. Even to the dusty branch of red mountain ash berries hanging under the Gilderoy, everything was in order, as he had known it; except that the door into his mother's room — the only other room on the ground floor of the little house — now stood open. With a new and deeper reverence he went slowly in, and paused. Here again all was in order, as in the time that seemed so many years ago; here again were silence and the yellow dimness of muffled sunshine. In all the room the only moving thing was the black shadow-pattern of the woodbine leaves, quivering at the top of the white curtain. He was still calm as he drew near the table by the other window, at the end of the room. On it lay, as if just put down, some unfinished work of his mother's, — some knitting or other, neatly smoothed out, with the ends of the needles thrust carefully through the black ball. The tears springing to his eyes, he looked again, and

there beside it on the table lay a letter in his own handwriting, — his letter from Palermo, with the money, — unopened. It had come too late; she had never once heard from him. And turning suddenly, he ran and knelt by the bed, flung his arms upon it, and burying his face, burst into such a passion of weeping as comes only once in a man's life.

When he came out of the house again he was no longer a boy. There was a hard look on his face: the features, always thin and delicate, had taken on a determined sharpness; out of the swarthy brown of his tan, the gray eyes looked startlingly and piercingly bright. In the carriage of his sinewy body there was far more of the soldier than the sailor.

In front of the Griswold house, at the nearest end of the village street, he met Heber, — an encounter which, if he had only known, was not strange, for the good creature had been watching at a window all the afternoon. In reply to his question, Heber took him along the road that led up the hill and into the little burying-ground, a rough clearing among the funereal pointed firs.

"Over there," said Heber, who had barely concealed a sombre pleasure in his office. He pointed to a corner where the sunlight still lay. "The rector had the stone put up," he added, as he turned away and left Marden alone once more.

Two stones of plain slate stood there under a stringy hackmatack. One he knew already; it bore the name "John Sebright," and the dates. On the other, made like the first but unspotted by the gray moss, was the name "Margaret Lee Sebright."

He stood there for a long time. It was evening before he returned to the house, and the last of the sunset shone pale over the jagged silhouette of fir-tops on the point, behind which the river flowed down unseen to the bay. He sat on the doorstep, thinking, far into the night. Outwardly he was master of himself, but in his heart the dreadful desperate calm was swept away from time to time by a flood of strange emotions: void, helpless wonder at what he should do with the fragments of a life so shattered; black hatred of his father and his brother, who had made

such things possible, and of himself, who seemed equally to blame; aching jealousy that his brother should have borne his mother's name of Lee. These thoughts he tried again and again to crush out as undutiful, — to drown even in bitter imaginings of the last days of his mother's life. But they appeared again and again, each time more powerful. Still more powerful, mingling with and mastering all his other emotions, was a newborn hatred of the sea, of all ships and sailors; a hatred as vast as the ocean itself, that lay beyond the village and the islands, under the evening star.

Somewhere round midnight, before he went to bed in one of the two rooms in the loft, he entered his mother's room, looked slowly about to see that everything was as it had been, then withdrew, and locking the door, hid the key behind the old spyglass on the kitchen shelf. Hereafter that room was to be a holy place.

The next morning his life began, alone; and alone it continued for five years, in house and village. He had already determined to

stay ashore and at home for the rest of his life. It was a vow. He did not think it an act of expiation, though he came to look upon his voyage, necessary as it had been, in the light of a fault beyond atonement. To stay now seemed merely the one course possible. He felt vaguely, without quite putting it into words, that he had this thing to be devoted to, as a doorkeeper to the temple. And so he remained, alone. The villagers were kind, and would have been companionable. But theirs was a world apart from his; and although Marden was good to them in return, and indeed became known for innumerable little kindnesses, it was chiefly for a reason that they never dreamed of, — that in the same spirit he would have died for the sake of the meanest person in the village, so lightly did he value his time or his life. Like Hercules in the Alcestis, — a Hercules in shabby clothes, — he held his life out on his hand for any man to take. And they, seeing him grow into a young man of few or almost no words, a young man strong, clean, and straight in his ragged jacket, with a thin, sad face and the

eyes of a prophet, — they pitied him as a "queer feller," and left him more and more alone.

In the same years the village began to prosper. As in many other little decayed seaports, men and women from the cities began to come there in the summer, and, finding the village "quaint" and the air pleasant, came again and brought others. Thus there was money to be had for fish, and lamb, and green peas, for the simple work of sailing a boat that you had been brought up in, or, if you were a boy, of following a golf-ball over the pasture lots and learning a new game. At about the same time a shrewd Yankee came and saw the abundance of clams in the long stretches of beach at low tide, and began shipping them away by barrelfuls to Boston and New York. Since this gave work to some eight or ten men in the town, there was no ill-feeling, beyond perhaps a little envy at his cleverness. Between these two new industries, the village began to enjoy a queer kind of mouldering prosperity, so that people had no longer, in the words of

Heber Griswold, to live through the winter on a greased rag.

One of the earliest neighbors to go to work for the Yankee was Marden. He could not deal with the summer people, who, besides being whole civilizations distant from him, came to represent in his mind the pitiable, empty possessors and disbursers of money that once would have meant so much to him. Under the Yankee, however, it was different. It was plain business, with few words; one was not expected to be a "character" into the bargain; and although Marden often raged to think that he had been too dull to find this means of livelihood when it was needed, he took a degree of comfort in working hard and steadily, out of doors, at a work that kept him along the beach, often within sight of his house. In the first season he became far and away the best among the clam-diggers. On almost any day, when the ebb-tide had bared the dreary waste of greenish brown seaweed and dun flats, he might be seen, an active form stooping along the edge of the bright water, always alone. With fork and basket

he worked over the wide sands from one to another of the beds, where the flats were riddled as with buckshot holes, from which little jets of clear water now and then spurted up, bright in the sun. He took solace, not in the money he was laying up, but in the steady work with his hands that kept his lonely mind from running too much in strange channels. Always he hated, with a growing hate, the sea that he worked beside.

So things went on in these five years. Often he longed for some companion to step from the warm, lighted circle of human beings that he seemed to stand outside of, in the dark; yet as often as the chance came to talk, he found to his sorrow that he had no words, or few, or empty, and retreated as a ghost from among his kindly fellow beings. In this world there had been only his mother; in the next — But that was a further darkness, in which he found only sickening doubts. And meantime, as a young man often will, he could feel himself growing old.

One hot, bright noon, while he was retreating up the beach with his muddy bas-

ketful of clams, before the rising tide that slowly drove him shoreward, his eye caught the flutter of something pink at the edge of the land near the house. Looking closer, he saw — with a touch of surprise, for the place was almost never frequented — that it was a woman who stood there at the foot of the bank. She was looking out toward him, but as he straightened up she stooped and began plucking busily among the beach-grass. Without much further thought, he fell to digging once more; yet as often as he looked up, there she was still, and when finally the tide made him give over the day's work and turn homeward, he found her standing in the nook formed by the two projecting banks between which the path from the house came scrambling down to the beach.

Into this nook the sun beat fiercely. The woman had turned her back, and, with one foot on a rock, was tying her shoe. Her pink calico dress, bright against the tawny gravel and parched grass of the bank, clung about her in the wind as close as if it had been wet. She had firm shoulders, — rather broad for

a woman of middle stature, — a wide, comely space between the shoulder-blades, a trim waist, and the ankle of a racer. Marden noted all this calmly (as he would have studied the build of a ship), and contrasted her with the summer women from the city.

"They trail their feet," he thought ungallantly, "like the cows coming down the lane."

He was about to carry his fork and basket past her up the bank, when she turned.

"Hello," she said cheerily, flashing a pair of bold eyes on him. "You scairt me. I did n't hear you comin'."

"That 's a lie," thought Marden; but he stopped and said quietly, "I 'm sorry."

"Oh," she cried, "you don't need be so sorry as all that!" And at the sight of his solemn face she burst into loud but not unpleasant laughter.

Marden, completely at a loss, was silent; and while he groped for words, the woman watched him with the eyes of raillery. Her whole body, slight almost to thinness, trembled with active merriment. Her cheeks were

flushed, and her black eyes of a strange watery lustre and fire. They were not at all those of the Sicilian girl at Palermo, yet somehow he vaguely identified them, and suffered the same dumb confusion before their light. At last, to his great relief, the woman spoke.

"You 're Marden Sebright, ain't you? I 've seen you on the w'arf, — and heard a lot about you besides," she added, with a slyness that seemed unnecessary.

"I hope," said Marden, "I hope"— but as he did not know exactly what, he stopped. He felt strangely drawn toward this woman, whoever she might be. He had gone about so much alone, so ghostlike; and she was so very much alive and full of high spirits.

"Oh, it was all nice," she cut in, "awful nice things, all of it, what I heard."

"I 'm glad of that," replied Marden, and balked, and felt himself a fool.

"I been waitin' a long time here to have a talk with you," she said plaintively. "You 're different from these people. They don't understand. And I hurt my finger foolin' with a rock while I was waitin'. See." —

And she suddenly thrust out her hand for him to take. He put down his basket and fork, very clumsily indeed, and took it, as one might handle a knife-blade. It was pale brown, and very small beside his own. Along one finger-nail was the faintest sign of a bruise. Her bracelet shone bright in the sun, — a silver chain, and a round silver bangle perforated with star-shaped holes.

"I 'm sorry," he said, and then added with blunt honesty, "but it ain't as bad as it might be. A stone-bruise *can* be pretty bad sometimes. You see, if it gets"—

But there was that in the mocking lustre of her eyes which cut him short in his pedagogy. Still holding her hand, he felt a great weakness come over him, a weakness overwhelmingly strong. Her face, the triangular face of a kitten, with her eyes of liquid fire, was turned up toward him earnestly in the fierce noon sunlight, and was no longer flushed, but pale. He felt that he ought to tell her something — something that she understood already and expected. But there was a long silence.

"You must be awful lonesome," she said

slowly, "livin' there all alone sence — for so long."

A light broke in upon Marden somehow, like the sun burning through a fog. In a flash his mind sped over the consequences. By his simple logic, if he should love this woman, he would marry her, and she would come to live — His whole nature suffered a revulsion, an upheaval. He put the hand slowly and coldly away from him. And she, who was looking only for such treatment as she had learned to expect from other men, found his gray eyes suddenly quiet, distant, full of undecipherable thoughts; and she half wondered at and half despised him.

"I am," he replied at last. Then, picking up his things from among the gravel, "Good-by," he said, and clambered up the path without looking back.

All that afternoon he walked furiously up river through a quiet hill and valley region that, with the gulls flecking it, might have been the Scottish highlands. All that evening he paced before the silent house, in the darkness. Sometimes he could have laughed

aloud at the figure he had cut; sometimes he felt the deepest degradation. He was vexed, feverish, thrown out of his reckoning. "It happens to every one," he kept telling himself; but that was just the trouble, — why should a thing so common, so laughably simple, so short in point of time, take on this enormous proportion in his life? And why did he seem now so much weaker and coarser? Not till late that night did he find himself calm again and fit to go indoors.

At last, addressing the stars, he said, "Captain Harlow was right about them."

And he opened the door and went in.

IV

THE SINGING IN THE HOUSE

After this, a year went by without further incident,— a summer of hard work, a winter of desperate sitting about and staring out of the window at snowfields and white-caps, of reading again the few books that had been his mother's, of pacing up and down like a wolf before the closed door of the other room.

After the adventure on the shore, Marden knew himself for a man apart from other men. Yet it had renewed his purposes within him. He must be steadfast to a memory, and the Sebright blood must die out of his veins. All winter he hammered at these thoughts. The spring drew on, when the cakes of ice came floating down in the black water, and a brown haze covered the horizon, and the patches of snow melted from under the firs and cedars, and the thin, black crescent lines of geese quivered northward in the sky, and the air was filled with the pungent, resinous smoke of brushwood fires, and the fields turned slowly from buff to green, and mayflowers grew again, and dandelions, and later the twin-flowers that Marden's mother had taught him to love. There were long, comforting walks in the warm air; now that he felt the settled calm of knowing himself irretrievably alone, the return of spring seemed no longer a cruel mechanism of nature. Summer found him at work again on the beach, pausing now and then to look shoreward, with a kind of sad beatitude, at the house that he guarded.

Once when he was at the wharf to help in shipping some of the Yankee's barrels, he saw among the bystanders, city and country loungers, the woman of that memorable noon. He recognized her with an odd emotion that he could not name. She had seen him, he was sure; but she looked scornfully past him, and began talking gayly to a great sullen man with a red beard and a Viking face, who stood beside her and scowled. Later he saw the two driving in a furious cloud of dust past the Griswold house into the up-country road.

"There goes old man Barclay and his housekeeper," called Heber from his doorway. "She must keep house pretty lively, to git so much time outdoor and off the farm." And he winked solemnly. Marden went on, laughing inwardly for the first time in months, but not at Heber's joke.

The summer passed quietly enough. Once he went to church, to please the rector, a comfortable blond Englishman who often asked him why he did not go.

"Your mother was so very devout, you

know," the rector had said, beaming at him mildly.

"Yes, but you see, sir," Marden had answered, "she hardly ever went, because she could n't walk so far. And so I 've got in the way of spending my Sundays at home always."

It was by this argument, nevertheless, that Mr. Bradwell prevailed. Unluckily, however, Marden happened to come on a morning when the good man had elected to inform the younglings of his flock that they should honor their parents. The exhortation remained long as a distressing memory. Marden had given the matter years of thought, as against the rector's week. He had never liked the latter part of the text, — "that thy days may be long,"— which this man, moreover, did not explain to his satisfaction. "It 's like a bargain," he thought; and his mind wandered curiously away to call up a picture of some black-bearded Jews he had seen trading in Palermo. Out of the whole hour in the dark little church he remembered chiefly this impression, and the sense of waiting for help that was not offered, and the

look of the fog that had been drifting like smoke past the windows. Always afterward the church-bell recalled that morning to him, till finally it seemed to ring an ironical refrain, — "that thy days may be long, long, — that thy days may be long." As if a man needed that, and as if they were not long enough already!

Though the rector saw that the odd young Sebright came no more to hear him, he took interest in the young man, and later had some comfortable ecclesiastical talks with him. He even was at pains to point him out, one day on the wharf, to a brother clergyman from the great world of cities.

"That young man there," he said, "the bright-eyed one who stands so straight, is quite an extraordinary character. He has been a sailor, and is a clam-digger. But do you know, he really has a mind of his own, and ideas. I was urging him the other day to go to the cities and make a career for himself, and he replied with a quotation from the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' — well, I can't quite recall it now, but I assure you it was aston-

ishingly apt. His personality has puzzled me extremely, I confess. He keeps entirely alone, and has something almost fanatical about him that is beyond my comprehension."

"Very interesting," said the greater prelate, nodding his gray head benignly. "One sees hermits nowadays, to be sure, and I presume that they all have their stories. Edwin and Angelina, perhaps?" He smiled gently, as at a drollery, and added, "It is doubtless he whom I have observed on the beach digging — quite like a picture of Millet's. . . . He has a good face."

"He seems to feel it his duty to stay here, I think," said the other, and they passed on to talk of golf.

That very afternoon duty was to put on toward Marden a newer and a sterner face. He had no presentiment while he walked through the street toward the setting sun, and through the fields already yellow with the autumn. He even felt a deep content when he mounted the knoll and stopped, as he often did, to look at the house standing there gray and silent, with the woodbine leaves

glossy in the late afternoon sunshine. It was very still and peaceful, — the sleepy village with long, stilted wharves behind him, the long beach and low water at his left hand, and in front, beyond the house, the yellow fields sloping up to the dark belt of fir woods toward which the sun was drawing down. The tide was far out; from the island and the point on the main shore the two long bars ran in thin and black penciling, almost joined at the channel. The horses that were pastured on the island were coming home, — tiny black figures that galloped along the bar, became mere specks as they swam the channel, and then galloped again to the land. Their whinnying, faint and thin across the mirror of the harbor, was the only sound. And as Marden stood there in the path, breathing the cool air that rose from the wet beach, drinking it in with the autumn sunshine, he was content in the happy weariness of a good day's work.

Suddenly he noticed that the door of the house was open, and that a thin smoke was curling from the chimney. And he had not

recovered from this surprise, when out of the dim interior there came an incredible sound. A voice was singing in the house, — a coarse, throaty bass that growled the semblance of a tune: —

"Oh, the National Line it ruined me,
It caused me grief an' pain,
So we 'll h'ist up on the Turkey,
An' we 'll whelt the road again."

The singer cleared his throat with a deeper growl, then spat, and went on: —

"We 'll whelt the road again, my boys,
We 'll whelt the road again,
We 'll h'ist up on the Turkey,
An' we 'll whelt the road again."

Marden stood transfixed. He knew in an instant what it meant. But it was impossible, he would not believe it, that this creature could be alive after sixteen years, and could return thus. His mind reeled in a vertigo, a nausea of dismay. Yet he pulled himself together, waited an instant to feel himself strong for the encounter, and advanced to the door.

He had thought himself ready, but he had not counted on such a sight. Just inside

the door a canvas bag lay dumped, with the letters "J. S.— Bark Gild—" showing through the dirt. Beyond it he saw his father's big armchair drawn out of its corner and before the stove, where it had not been for years; and slumped in the chair was a great hulk of a man, with a fierce white mustache and a gray-brown face. The room smelled of a rank pipe and of whiskey.

For the first instant Marden thought his father had come back to life; for the next, it was surely a dream; then he was himself again, grasping wildly at the situation, and thanking God that his mother had died before this thing could happen.

"Oh, I 've got no good o' me daughters
Since Barney came ashore"—

growled the apparition, and spat again, so that the warped stove sizzled. Then, as if conscious of the eyes fixed upon him, he looked up and saw Marden gripping the door frame. For all the world, the big face and staring, puffy eyes were those of the old captain, John Sebright.

"Hello, podner," he grunted, half surly,

half cheerful, "who might you be? An' where 's the inmates o' this here shanty, *I* want to know?" Then suddenly, his eyes staring wider and a grin of foolish astonishment spreading over his brown face, — "Well, if it ain't the kid, by James Rice!" And with surprising quickness for a man of his bulk, he was out of the chair and wringing Marden by the hand, with roars of laughter that made the windows rattle. "Ho, ho, ho! I would n't 'a' knowed ye, Mard, my boy, — I would n't 'a' knowed ye, honest! O-oh, ho, ho!"

Marden let him go on shaking the hand, but could not trust himself to speak. The other suddenly stopped and stared.

"He don't know me! By the Lord Harry, he don't know me!" he cried, and burst into enormous guffaws.

"Yes, I do," said Marden quietly, pulling his hand away, for he too had a strong arm. "You 're Lee." He added with an effort, "You 're my brother."

"Right you are, boy," cried Lee, laughing still, "Lee Sebright, otherwise Bat. — But

you don't seem so mighty glad to see your brother, either," he grumbled; and then cheering up again, "That 's all right, boy. You 'll like me better, more ye see o' me. Everybody does. Say, I was afraid the' was n't nobody at home, anyway. Where 's the old woman?"

Marden shot him a black look.

"If you mean our mother," said he, "she died while you were away."

Looking his elder brother square in the face, he read there a genuine surprise, which gave way to genuine dejection. At least, the gross joviality of the man oozed out of his hulking body, and he stood crestfallen, thumbing his pipe-bowl, and looking down at his feet, which were braced widely apart as if on shipboard.

"Well, now, that 's noos for ye," said he, shaking his great head gloomily. "That 's what I call downright noos for ye. Is that straight, Mard, boy? Well, — I swear! It don't seem possible. She was — It don't seem possible. Why, look a-here," he cried petulantly, "here was me a-thinkin' how glad

she 'd be to see me, and a-lookin' for'ard to comin' home, and — and — a-lookin' for'ard to it, ye know"— He stepped back, and, leaning against the edge of the table, pulled his fierce white mustache, and stared weakly at the floor.

"You seem to have looked for'ard to it long enough," said Marden dryly. "Meantime, she died — six years ago last April. I was n't so clever as this Yankee here, and must go away to sea to keep her alive through the winter. But she died,"— his voice was like flint, — "and she died alone, because she never told them how sick she was. And I was enjoying myself at sea, and so were you, — oh, I 'm with you there, — and we were both looking for'ard to coming home! Ah, I tell you we 're a fine pair of sons!"

The rebuke reached the elder brother, who stood like a whipped schoolboy. But it contained subtleties beyond him, for he replied at last, in a tone of piety, —

"Well, boy, we must make the best of it, I s'pose. We both had our faults, says you. An' 't was a sad home-comin' for you, an' a

sadder one for me, ye see, bein' gone longer. If 't was to do over again, we 'd do better. Well, here 's our comfort," — and before Marden could stop him, he had pulled a black bottle from his pocket, and taken a long swig, leaning back over the table till the sunlight shone through his white mustache. "Here," said he, "have some. It 'll cheer us up."

Marden snatched the bottle from his hand, and whirled it out of the door far down the bank.

"There 'll be none o' that in this house," he cried, his gray eyes blazing, "nor out of it, while we 're talking o' such matters!"

Lee sprang from the table, bulky but active, with knotted fists and an ugly face flushed purple.

"Wha' d' ye mean?" he bellowed. "Who are you to take a man's drink away from him? Do you own this house? It 's much mine as yours, an' if I want to take a drink in it, or anything else, what 'll you do about it? Hey?"

Marden stepped closer. He stood very

straight, and looked very proud and dangerous in his anger.

"Hey? What 'll you do about it?" roared his brother.

"I 'll smash your face," he answered, slowly and incisively, as if giving a piece of advice.

Through the open door came the faint whinnying of the horses on the point; the clock on the shelf ticked heavily; and Lee breathed as if he had been running. The two brothers stood ominously close, looking each other in the eye. Though one was a stripling beside the other's gigantic width, they were both strong men, both physically brave, both at white heat. Yet the power of victory shone like a light through Marden's eyes, and the older brother saw it. He stood undecided for an instant, then struck his colors and unclinched his fists.

"Why, look a-here," said he, turning it off with an uneasy laugh. "Look here at us, would ye? Sixteen years, an' here we are like a couple o' gamecocks! Mard, boy, I like yer spunk, damn me if I don't. 'D lick yer

big brother, would ye?" His good nature broke out again. "By the Lord, a chip o' the old linkumvity block! Ho, ho, ho! I 'll give ye credit fer that, buster!"

And he would have clapped Marden on the shoulder — but did not.

"What 's the use of manhandlin' each other over half a longneck?" he sneered genially. "'T wan't no better 'n rot-gut, anyhow, an' the' 's lots more where that come from. Ye see," he added with a face and a voice of great candor, "I don't bear no malice. A word and a blow, as the old sayin' is, an' all right again. That 's my style. I like yer spirit, lad, *I* tell *you*. — Oh, well, if ye want to be sulky, sail ahead, and have yer own way!"

He went over to the big chair, slumped into it once more, lighted his pipe, and spat on the stove. But he was too well pleased with his magnanimity to stay silent long, for presently he began to hum, or rather grumble: —

"Wey, hey, blow a man down,
An' they all shipped fer sailors aboard the Black Ball.
Oh, give the wind time fer to blow a man down."

"That 's all right," he added consolingly. "That 's all right, Mard. You 'll like me. Every one does as knows me."

Marden looked at him, where the heavy shoulders bulged beyond the chair-back, and was torn between laughter, scornful silence, and tears. At least he was the master, and he felt thankful, though he had had no doubt at any moment. For a long time he stood watching, while his brother smoked, and spat, and growled snatches of song.

"That 's the shotgun I shot the loon with," Lee broke in pensively. "An' that 's the Gilderoy a-hangin' there, same as when we was boys, ain't it? A fine ship she must 'a' been, an' a fine man as run her. The' ain't no more ships like her these days. Sawin' 'em off fer coal-barges, they are now. All the ships now 's coffins with three sticks in 'em, or little better. Well, say, Mard," emptying his pipe on the stove-lid, "ain't it gettin' round time to eat, huh?"

That was a strange supper the two brothers ate together at the table by the window where Marden and his mother had used to face

each other. Lee did most of the eating, and all the talking, which ran chiefly on his voyages and what a figure he had cut in the world,— strange disconnected yarns, jumping from port to port, from London to Valparaiso, Melbourne, and Hong Kong. Some were funny, some rudely picturesque, some obscene. Through them all Marden found himself wondering to think how easily he might once have gone on doing just as this other of the Sebright blood.

Finally, when the fish and bread and butter and coffee had all disappeared, and Marden was busy clearing away the things, the sailor took to the armchair again by the stove.

"It 's a cold climate you 've got here," he grumbled, huddling in the chair. "Ongodly cold." But he was evidently in gross comfort, for he sat there gorged, staring in front of him, and from time to time made a sucking noise through his teeth that sounded in the room as loud as a man chirruping to a horse.

By lamplight he seemed once more like the ghost of the old captain, so that Marden,

sitting at the window and watching him in silence, felt an obsession of unreality.

Toward nine o'clock Lee roused himself, and looked about.

"Say, mate, I 'm a-goin' to turn in. I 'll take this here room on the lower deck, I guess. Hullo, it 's locked. Where 's the key?" And he shook the door.

"Never you mind," said his brother, with a calmness he did not feel. "That 's closed for good, and you 'll sleep in the loft, — whichever room you want."

"Humph!" grunted the sailor. "You 're free with yer orders, ain't ye?"

Marden looked so dangerous, however, that he said no more, but took the lamp in one hand and grappled the canvas bag in the other.

"It 's a pretty poor sort o' home-comin'," he growled, kicking the little deal door open, and standing at the foot of the stair with his pirate face shining brown and evil in the lamplight. "It 's a pretty poor sort o' home-comin', to find yer old woman gone an' yer brother turned into a teetotal parson. That 's what I say."

The door clinked behind him. Marden, left in darkness but for the firelight through the chinks in the stove, heard the heavy feet go clumping upstairs. Then there came a stirring about and creaking boards overhead, and growls, and boots dropped heavily, then silence, and at last tremendous snores. Fumbling in the dark, he took the key from behind the spyglass, to hang it by a string about his neck. Then he sat there by the table, and thought, and thought. The creature overhead seemed actually to weigh down upon him and the whole house. But he felt equal to the burden, and even resigned, now that it had so happily come six years too late. He sat thinking and thinking, long after the gleam of the fire had died. At last, from bodily weariness, he fell into a doze and then into a sleep, with his head on his arms.

When he woke the dawn was glimmering in the window beside him. Heavy with sleep, he stared about and thought drunkenly that it must have been a dream; but next instant the loud snoring in the loft set him right.

V

THE SEBRIGHT BLOOD

For the first day or two of their life together, it seemed again to Marden as if it were all a dream, as if his brother had long ago been drowned at sea, and this were a phantom come to torment him in the lonely house. The reality of the thing soon came back to him, however. Lee was too much in the flesh, too loud and jovial and earthy. With that terrible ease with which a man adapts himself to anything, the younger brother became used to having the older about. Marden saw his past life, alone or with his mother in the house, as some distant memory almost in a golden age, a quiet interregnum between the tyrants of circumstance. By brute weight this new duty crushed together the epochs of his life, joining the present to that past when old John Sebright had been a growling nightmare in the house. The northern autumn, a season of paradox when nature grows more sad and cold, while the

young blood flows brisker in the veins, drew slowly with ironical sunlight across the dying fields and through the shivering trees. And by November, when the first flurry of snow whirled in the air, it seemed to Marden as if he had always lived so, guarding the closed door against this creature of his own blood.

Their life was together, yet vastly separate. When Lee found his brother unmoved by stories that had set all the forecastle in an uproar, he grew more surly and silent indoors. By tacit agreement the two saw less of each other. Whoever came first to table left the bread and the knife lying ready for the other; and if it were Lee, there were always very dirty dishes left to be washed, while he was out lounging about the village from morning till night. In fine weather he never came home at noon, which made it easier for Marden, who must keep a constant but secret watch upon him and the house. This was not hard to do, so far as that the season of clam-digging was virtually over. Yet it became very dull work, — always to be on hand as if by chance,

always to outwatch him at night, — and always the same old songs in the throaty bass, the stories out of the gutter, or out of the scuppers and the bilge, the same boasting, the same sneers, the tobacco smoke, the spitting, the odor of bad liquor.

In the matter of this same liquor there appeared a droll sign of the younger brother's mastery, which after the open quarrel had come to be silently recognized. Lee never again attempted to bring a bottle indoors. But whether in fair weather or rain, whether on a hot summer noon or a bitter morning when the snow clogged the door knee-high, he would tramp to the shelf, take down the old brass spyglass, and with a growl — "Here 's for a look at yer damn fresh water shippin' " — would be gone outdoors to some hiding-place or other. At night, it was, "Well, let 's see if all 's snug alow and aloft." He always came back more bitter or more gay, according to the mood in which he had set out. And Marden, who could rule him drunk or sober, was content to let it go at this.

Drunk he was for the most part, between

visits to his private cache, somewhere under a rail fence behind the house, and visits to Jim Driscoll's secret barroom. This last, a secret which all the town knew, was in a tumbledown shanty, with windows shuttered and barred, on the most rickety wharf of all the crazy old piles. Here, where one dim kerosene lamp burned night and day from among the bottles behind the greasy bar, Lee spent much of his time, making friends over a glass of beer or rum and water. What little money he had brought home he spent quickly and generously on these friends, as he afterward spent what he could borrow from Marden on various pretenses, and what little he got by spasmodic efforts at clam-digging. His favorite trick was to borrow somebody's sailboat, take a party of summer people out, run them cleverly aground on the bar or elsewhere, and, after entertaining them with sea stories, overcharge them for the loss of his time in getting home so much later than they had agreed. The profits of these social afternoons he would spend freely at Driscoll's in still more social evenings. And the boozy

loungers admired his cleverness and his knowledge of men and cities.

"Why, look a-here," he would cry sometimes, leaning against the bar, with his piratical mustache bristling and his slouch hat raked over one ear. "Look now, what do you swabs know about life, huh? Ever been in Archangel, or London, or Fernando Po, or South Georgia, or Candlemas, or the Tonga Islands, or Noo Caledonia, or Lisbon, or Sitka, or Bombay?" He pounded the bar till the dregs leaped upward in his glass. "No, says you, never a one of 'em! But I have, mind ye, an' more to boot; an' I 've seen men, an' women, too. Aw, hell" — and in a tone of great disgust he would launch into one of his thousand yarns. At the end there would be loud laughter, and more drinks, till his audience forgot this great man's contempt in the flattery of his friendship.

Strangely enough, he was not so unpopular among the orderly people in the village as one might have thought. His loud good nature and bluff willingness to be friends made him tolerated where he was not liked. Then, too,

he had brought a fiddle home in the old captain's bag, and was eager to play it at dances, which he did with tipsy vigor and flourish. Being too large and strong for a butt, he became a "character." And so, if people laughed at Bat Sebright behind his back, they usually wore a friendly smile when they met him face to face.

"He ain't so queer and offish, like his brother," they said. Even the rector took something like this view.

"Those two Sebrights," he said, smiling, "are like the man and woman in the barometer. You never see them together, and it 's always cloudy weather with one, and sunshine with the other."

Heber Griswold was almost alone in opposing this simile.

"Humph!" said he, on hearing it reported. "What? Him? Bat Sebright? Humph!— A street angel and a house devil."

As two years drifted along, and Bat's figure lost its novelty in the village street, more people inclined to Heber's opinion. The flavor of the sea still clung about him,

but the romance had faded away. Perhaps he borrowed too many little sums; perhaps he made too free among the sailboats; perhaps he waked too many people when, almost every midnight or early morning, he scuffed and stumbled home, roaring to some companion, "You 're the damnedest finest man on the green globe!" or bellowing sadly, to the echoes of the empty street and darkened houses: —

> "Oh, they sank her in the Low Lands,
> Lo-ow Lands, Lo-ow Lands,
> Oh, they sank her in the Low Lands low!"

Whatever it was, he fell off in the general estimation. His glory paled, like the moon seen by day; or like himself when, after an evening of hearty rule, big and flushed and effulgent on the platform of the dance-hall, he came slouching home by daylight, blear-eyed and gray, and years older in a white stubble of unshaven beard. When the gossips learned that Marden always sat up till the drunkard was in bed, they began to guess, though vaguely, why the younger brother, too, looked so much older and more haggard.

Some of the women in the village stood out longest in liking Bat Sebright without reserve. Perhaps there were those who hoped to gain through him a better acquaintance with his indifferent and inscrutable brother. But others liked him for his own sake and his own taking way, which he had none the less because he bragged of it. Certainly there had been rumors and veiled jokes within his first fortnight ashore, and little by little he walked in an inglorious halo of scandal, which grew more luminous with the affair of old Barclay's housekeeper. He met her, it seems, at a dance where he was in one of his most dashing and picturesque moods. The affair soon became notorious.

Yet Marden did not hear of it, and found it out for himself only by accident. Once, when the high tide had stopped his work for the afternoon, he was walking where the up-country road dipped into a valley of sombre firs. From time to time, out of the dark woods on either hand and into the sunshine on the dusty road, rabbits came hopping, lean and brown in their summer coats. To

watch them the closer, Marden walked very quietly over the short parched grass of the roadside. And so, turning the flank of a granite boulder noiselessly, he came upon his brother, who stood with his broad back toward him, and who held in a bearlike hug the woman of that noon on the beach. In the same moment she struggled free, with a little shriek; but she was quite shameless, for with what sight there was in her wild, glazed eyes she looked only scorn at the intruder. Marden passed without change of stride or turn of head, though his heart beat curiously faster; and when their loud derision followed him, it was he who was both angry and ashamed.

That night Lee came home late, but sober enough. He sat down by the open window, and smoked; and while Marden glowered from the farthest corner, he looked out with great satisfaction across the harbor. Presently, spitting out of the window upon a tall stalk of London Pride so that it swayed with its flowers red in the lamplight, he said:—

"Lord, don't she think small o' you!—

Bess, I mean. — Say, she would n't give you hell-room, honest. — Dunno why, but," he added with malice, "she 's a fine judge o' men. Knows me like a book."

"That 's enough," said Marden savagely. "You 'll mention her no more in this house, do you hear?"

"Jealous, huh?" chuckled the sailor.

"Shut your head," said his brother.

He was obeyed. Not only for that evening, but from then on, they exchanged no further word of Barclay's Bess. But Lee, imagining himself the cause of a bitter jealousy, so gloried in himself as a dramatic figure that he became generous, after his fashion. True, there came a period of great sullenness that October, when he had been away for three days, and came back old and transformed, with the white stubble covering his face, and his nose broken, and a bloody cheekbone. He had the doctor in to set his nose. Marden paid for it. Meantime the village rang with the saga of a fight in the hawthorn lane on the Barclay farm between Bat Sebright and the old red-bearded Viking. And for a fortnight

the sailor nursed himself and cursed himself by the stove.

This must have been only an episode, however, for his good humor returned, and in a month soared at higher pitch than ever. But now that winter was on, Marden found him more of a "house devil" again. He went out oftener with the spyglass to watch the shipping from behind the rail fence, and as the weather grew worse he sat in the big chair, and smoked, spat, and fiddled, or grumbled out his songs. On evenings when the snow or the cold kept him from going to Driscoll's or elsewhere, he often did his best to be entertaining, with no encouragement beyond silence.

One winter night, after scraping lugubriously on the fiddle, Lee broke out into a song of incredible filth.

"That 'll do," said Marden from his corner.

The sailor leered at him, but stopped, and contented himself with sucking noisily through his teeth. Then he began another: —

". . . But now we 're off to Adelaide
For to give those girls a chance.

"Walk her round, boys-oh-boys,
We 're all bound to go.
Walk her round, my" —

"Please don't sing that, either," Marden broke in with unusual gentleness.

His brother looked up in wrathful surprise.

"Why, look a-here," he bellowed. "What 's the matter with you? The' ain't a word o' dirt in that song, so help me."

Marden could not have explained to him what echoes it had raised, and was silent.

"You 're a beauty, you are," growled Lee. "You ain't got common sense. A man 's got to come down to psalm-singin', like a reg'lar Rescue Mission. — Well, here 's one for ye, parson, that I learned from Scotty McKenzie." And, with a fair imitation of the Scots, he croaked away: —

"John come kiss me now,
John come kiss me now,
John come kiss me by and by,
And mak na mair adow.

"The Lord thy God I am,
That, John, doth thee call.
John signifies man,
By grace ce-les-ti-all.

"So it 's John come kiss me now,
John come kiss me now,
John come kiss me by and by,
And mak na mair adow."

"There 's a godly one for ye," he sneered. Hereafter this became his favorite song indoors, and he sang it in the black joy of his heart.

But this was not so bad as his long evenings of drunken gloom, when he sat there with a hopeless face, silent, or growling from under his white mustache, "Here we are on a lee shore an' the riggin' rotten!" Then it seemed as if Marden were sitting by lamplight in a house of ghosts. The loss of sleep and the constant watching had worn him thin, febrile, and morbid. Often, now, the old captain was there bodily before his eyes; behind him, in the room with the closed door, his mother sat trembling with fear, as he remembered her in his boyhood. It was no fancy, but reality. Through all that hideous time he felt his mother's actual presence in the house, a comfort and a strength. Yet the long winter of spectral evenings told on him. By

spring the world seemed feverish and phantasmagoric. By summer, though he could work again, he dug the clams in a frenzy of hatred toward them and all creatures of the sea, of which he now felt a physical loathing. Given a Hamlet who lives with his ghosts, who has no power of foolery to relieve his overwrought mind, and whose mission is one of endurance harder than action, you will find him grow dangerous. Marden himself began to feel that something must happen.

At length something did. In August the Yankee, hearing of some new clam-beds at the head of the bay, came to get Marden to drive there with him and inspect them. Since the road ran thirty miles about, it meant staying there over night, and Marden at first refused. But while the Yankee lingered on the knoll, arguing nasally, Lee came out of the house and hailed them.

"Ahoy, parson, I 'm a-goin' off fer three days. D' ye hear?" And he slouched off across the fields into the up-country road.

As the sailor always told the truth about his excursions, and — if anything — forecast

them too short, Marden gave in to his employer, locked up carefully, and went along. But he was uneasy all the time they were gone, and in the strange bed he lay awake all night, listening to the rain. When finally, in mid-afternoon of the next day, the Yankee pulled up the rattling wagon and let him out where the road turned into the village street, Marden took to his heels and ran through the tall grass to the knoll. Somehow it was like his first coming home from sea, to find himself alone.

He was climbing the path, when suddenly he looked at the house. His heart stopped beating, then began to pound against his ribs. Among the woodbine that covered the end nearest him the window of his mother's room stood open. It had not been so since the days when she had sat there knitting, to smile at him as he came up the bank. For one instant of madness he expected to see her face appear in the frame of woodbine leaves. Then he sprang forward to the door, sick with a new fear.

VI

"THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG"

The door was still locked. Puzzled not a little, he turned the key, and stopped to listen. All was quiet within. Wondering, he pushed the door open, looked in, and was astounded.

The kitchen, always so orderly, was in the dirtiest confusion. Over the floor lay the tracks of muddy boots, with here and there a cake of dried mud. A broken chair and the fragments of a plate cluttered round the legs of the table, on which there stood, in a litter of dishes, two great empty bottles. The stuffed loon in the corner leaned its black head tipsily against the wall, as if it were the culprit. Through the back door, which stood open, Marden caught sight of another bottle smashed at the foot of the chopping-block. All this he saw in a flash, thinking, "He came home late, for his boots were muddy, and I did n't hear it rain till nearly midnight." Taking a lid from the stove, he found coals

still smouldering. Lee had been there till noon or thereabout.

But next instant he lost all use of reason. The door into his mother's room stood open, splintered about the lock. With the cry of an animal, he darted in, and saw everything in a state of indescribable breakage, as if men had been wrestling about there. Some one had climbed in through the window, shoving the table aside. The knitting lay flung in a corner, and beside it the envelope to his letter, ripped open. The floor boards and the rugs were smeared with muddy tracks.

Marden shook his fist at the cracked ceiling and at the heavens beyond it.

"He 'll pay for this!" he cried, choking. "He 'll pay for this!"

Then, as he stood in dumb rage, the tears running down his cheeks, he mechanically straightened with his foot the deerskin rug that lay by the bureau. The movement uncovered something small that shone on the floor. He picked it up, but dropped it as if burned. He had seen it shine before. It was three links of silver chain, on a silver bangle

perforated with star-shaped holes. Both of them had been there.

Something gave inside Marden's head; he shuddered as with ice and fire; the room swam black round him. He heard a strange voice cry in the distance, and knew that it was himself. When the darkness cleared he found himself standing on the stove in the kitchen, tearing down the gun and the powderhorn from over the Gilderoy. He jumped to the floor again, and, sobbing and whispering strange words, tugged with his teeth at the wooden plug in the horn. With the facility of acts in a dream, the black grains poured softly in; the wadding was rammed home; the cap from the little box on the shelf slipped over the nipple precisely; the leaden ball dropped plump into the barrel. He deliberated a moment.

"No, one bullet 's enough," he whispered. "It could n't miss him."

Then he searched wildly for a second wad, but could not find it, till at last, ransacking the table drawer, he fished out a scrap of soiled blue paper, written on in a large hand. He stopped and read it carefully: —

Drake caulking ballast ports	do.15. do.
Bissant brasswork	2.17.11
Ross ballast	53.13. 4
Edy butcher	18.15. 8
Moon optician	.18. 6
Doyle sailmaker	11. 1. 1
Pilotage to the Downs	10.10.
forwd.	£298.18. 1

He thought painfully. "I don't believe this is important," he concluded, then crumpled the paper up and rammed it home fiercely, enraged at the loss of time, and with the words, "Hurry, hurry!" coming in a savage whisper from somewhere.

He ran blindly out into the hot sun, bareheaded, gun in hand. For an instant habit told him to lock the door. But the abomination was done, the sanctuary violated. With a frantic, hopeless gesture he turned again, and ran down through the fields into the upcountry road. The heat had burned away all traces of the rain, so that the silent yellow dust rose softly in his trail. Over the hill he ran, down through the valley of firs, past the granite boulder, from behind which a solitary lean rabbit hopped across his way and into the dark woods. Sweating, breathless, Mar-

den ran on and on, without sight, without hearing, and without plan save for an instinct, a certainty that he was in the right path; till suddenly, as he plunged down into a gully that cleft an open space through the woods on either side, a plan flashed into his head, and he stopped, panting, blind with sweat and tears.

Beyond, just above the little hill that wound sharply upward before him, he knew that the highway forked into two roads, both of which ran past the great triangle of the Barclay farm. Lee might come by either. The thought of deliberate waiting, of ambush, filled him with nausea. But there must be no mistake, — that creature must not have the devil's luck to get by. He grounded his gun in the dust, and looked about the little clearing.

"It must be here," he thought, and, for all his hurry in the sun, was struck cold and shuddered.

The clearing, an old dry watercourse, slanted down from the left in a tangle of low bushes and weeds. Marden chose the upper

side of the road, and flung himself in, to swelter in the fierce heat.

He listened and listened for footsteps on the hill, and stared through the bushes till his neck and elbows ached. Then while time dragged by, long as years, the details of the place grew focused out of a blur into painful and weary distinctness. Trees stood out from the vague green wall, — cedars, spruces, firs, alders, and a willow with its leaves blown silver side out in the hot, faint breeze. The wild growth about him resolved itself into bushes of dusty, crumbling raspberries, into yellow St. John's-wort and the sickly pink of fireweed and sheep's-laurel, into withered caraways, into scorched strawberry leaves with wiry runners, old nameless twigs bleached silver gray, the rusty white cockades of queen-of-the-meadow. The road wound up over the little hill to the skyline, a bleak avenue of pebbles and dust between tall weedy mullein stalks and fat little childish fir trees with their pale green tips sticking up knee-high. The very blades of grass became amazingly diverse under his eyes, and ach-

ingly full of the minutest life. The very silence grew into a thin, metallic hum of flies that he had heard in some other stillness before. And over and through it all blazed and quivered the truculent heat.

All at once his heart gave a jump, and began to flutter in his ribs, little as a kitten's. There were footsteps scrambling among the pebbles at the top of the hill. He grasped the gun, and craned his neck to see above a clump of snapdragon. He could have cried out aloud in the long suspense. But no, it was not his brother: the man was little and thin. As he came down into the gully, Marden knew him for Heber Griswold. He came very close, stopping once nearly opposite Marden to pluck a joint of timothy, which he did with difficulty, it was so dry and tough with overripeness. The straw swayed in his teeth as he passed on, smiling in quizzical meditation. And Marden, lying smothered in the underbrush, found kindly feelings mingled in the confusion of his heart.

The heat and the hum of flies settled down again more intensely. A long time passed.

Finally a new sound broke in, — the bell in the distant village, ringing to Wednesday vespers. The old refrain started up once more, — "that thy days may be long, long, that thy days may be long," — ringing slowly over and over again. Marden nodded over his shoulder toward the sound, his teeth bare in a grin of satirical friendliness. "Right you are, old fellow, for once," he thought, while the warning rang on in his head, half solemnly, half in a kind of black merriment.

Turning to watch again, he noticed a mosquito on the gun barrel, and crushed it with his finger mechanically. The thing must have been biting him and sucking its fill, for it left a sticky smear of blood on the warm brown metal. The sight of blood disgusted him. He wiped his hand vigorously in the shriveled grass.

Suddenly, from the trees above the hill, a squirrel chittered like a fisherman's reel. As if it had been a signal, there followed a scuffing among the pebbles, and in the gap of the bare road the broad figure of Lee heaved

against the sky. He came slouching down close by the line of dusty mullein stalks, and almost reached the foot of the gully.

Marden leaped out into the road, cocking the gun as he stood up straight. At the sight of this squat creature, all the years of smothered hatred blazed ungovernably.

"Stop!" he cried, dry and harsh.

The sailor jumped back with a motion of his arm like a boxer guarding.

"Hold on! Hold on, Mard!" he cried in a strangely little voice. "I did n't — it was n't us, honest!"

Each man, looking at the other, knew that the lie would not serve. And Lee saw death in the round black muzzle and the blazing eyes behind it. Let it go to his credit that he bellowed like a bull and hurled himself forward with great gnarled hands grappling in the air.

The gun roared in the stifled gully.

In the cloud of smoke the sailor reeled, with a gray face and his open mouth a black circle; then his bulk collapsed like a telescope, or rather like an empty meal sack that

has been held open and suddenly dropped. Marden, deafened by the explosion, and with his shoulder smarting from the recoil, gave a loud cry as he saw the man fall so through the smoke, and then jerk forward convulsively, burying his face in the sharp bristles of a little fir tree, as a heavy sleeper might bury it in a pillow. This lasted only a moment, for the body rolled over with a terrible limpness, and lay on its back, the twisted legs pointing uphill and the head jammed over against one shoulder by the weight. Almost in the same instant there shuddered over the gray features a swift and mortal change.

The smoke drew slowly up the hill, trailing in low-spread layers and wisps among the lean mullein stalks. With the smell of powder mingled that of burning paper from the wads, which lay smoking among the pebbles and dust. There also rose the pungent odor of rum: in the pocket of the blue flannel shirt that was drawn so tight over the huge chest a flat bottle had broken. The cloth was dark and sopping with this, and another stain, that spread. No trace of red

appeared: lifeblood and rum soaked the flannel together, indistinguishable.

Marden, with gun grounded, looked down at this, his thin face stern as bronze in the hot sun, — the face of a soldier and a priest.

Slowly the ringing in his ears turned into the hum of flies that made the silence. Then of a sudden the place was struck into dusk. The sun had gone behind the trees above the road, leaving the gully in shadow, as if clouded over before a storm. The hollow seemed also to become cooler. And just then Marden, with his eyes still fixed on the dead man's face, lying half sidewise, in the stubble of beard, saw it as if it had been his father's. At the thought, his heart shrank small and cold: it was as though he had killed them both. His whole body unstrung, like a fiddlestring when the peg slips. Without another look at the dead man, he turned and ran in panic and horror, shivering with cold, stumbling to his knees with weakness, back into the sunlight and along the deserted road.

VII

THE CLUE

Why he went back to the house he never could have told, any more than how he got there, or whether he had passed any one — though he had not — on the way. He only knew that he found himself sitting on the millstone at the door, and that in the east, over the sea, an ancient star shone bright in mocking calmness. He held his head in his hands, shuddering uncontrollably in a tumult of dismay. He could not rightly think what he had done. Which of them had he killed, or was it indeed both? Why, why in all the welter of chances, had this thing happened? He racked his brain for some word of help, but no word came except a fragment he had been reading the day before, — by what right had he read it? — the prayer of Elijah: "It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." Better? How many times worse! They, rough, simple men, had done what they knew, no more.

And he, what sacred things had he not known, what high purposes had he not guarded, only to dash them underfoot!

He shook his fist at the calm, inveterate star.

"Who 'll be the judge, then?" he asked fiercely, in a whisper more heart-breaking than a cry. "What 's right, and what 's wrong? And what is there left?"

He found no answer, and dropped his head again, shivering as in a fever-fit.

A horse, left alone in the island pasture where the tide had cut him off, whinnied out of the distant dark. Even in Marden's torment, the sound brought back that evening when his brother had returned. Memories and questions swarmed in his brain again, rioting. Why could not he that now lay there dead in the gully, why could not he have stayed away? The world was so big, and full of a million other mishaps. If he were to die, a drunken lurch on the string-piece of a pier, a slip on an icy foot-rope, and Fate would have been satisfied without this dreadful means. Or again, was it all a fault of his, Marden's?

Could he not have treated Lee differently? Had he not been too stern and sour with the poor devil? "For God knows," he cried within himself, "we are all poor devils together." Had it been a test, long, secret, subtle, and had he failed once more through dullness? Perhaps all the years of night-long watching, without complaint, showed him only a hard-hearted prig, a weakling Pharisee. Or if not, were they all to go for nothing because the watchman had been false a single night? These and a hundred worse questions hounded him over a black, shifting wilderness of despair. He was alone. There was no creature believed in him or loved him, not even his mother, of whom he dared not think. The remembrance of the starry night aboard the Merry Andrew, of the spring walks alone that had strengthened his devotion, rose in his mind like pale glimpses in the life of some other man, long ago. Surely that boy — and yet here he sat, a murderer, with the eldest primal curse upon him. He groaned aloud, and flinging back his head, looked up into the infinite brightness

and distance of the stars, from whence came no help. His sight and his thought could no longer penetrate among them, to thread a measureless way from depth to outermost depth, and be cleansed in the wonder of space. His head only grew the dizzier, with thoughts confined and whirling.

A light, flurried footstep sounded in the path close by. He sprang up. People in the world — he had forgotten them, and here was one coming, perhaps to speak empty words, perhaps to ask why he had done what was done.

He hoped the last, and was prepared to answer humbly.

Before he knew what was happening, a woman had run and flung her arms about him where he stood by the larch tree. Surely it was a dream, this swift embrace in the dark. But she was alive, warm, breathless, and was shaken violently as she clung to him.

"Oh," she panted, in tempestuous relief and hurry, "oh, why did n't you — why did n't you — oh, you fool!" She laughed in

breathless and wild happiness, her voice smothered by his clothing.

"Why did n't you let me know?" she cried. "You 're so deep — I never guessed — not till I found him there — A-ah!" she shuddered, and clung to him as if she would have fallen.

"There was blood on him," she whispered brokenly. "And it 's on me now — my sleeves. He was all wet when I — I dragged him into the bushes. It was in the dark — and O God, so heavy! — Let 's go, let 's go, let 's go, quick!"

"Where? Go where?" Marden asked in amazement. He tried to raise her face, but could not, from where she held it buried against his side and in the crook of his arm.

"Across — over to the other side," she said. "Him an' I was goin' anyway to-night. That 's why we — But that 's before I knew what you — Come on, the boat 's ready hid. Come along!"

Marden slowly drew near the brink of comprehension. The woman suddenly raised her head, seizing him anew and fiercely by the arm.

"You must n't be afraid of me any more," she coaxed, still in a whisper. "Don't be so cold to me. I understand you now, don't I? Don't I?" she repeated vehemently, shaking him. And she gave a little happy laugh that rang dreadful in Marden's ears. "Oh, you quiet men!"

Marden looked at her, silent. His eyes, accustomed to the starlight, saw with an unaccountable clearness. The woman's face — the odd, alluring face, triangular like a kitten's — was upturned to his once more, and once more was mysteriously pale. This time, at night, there was something magic and phantasmal in the yearning darkness of the great eyes. He knew her thoroughly vile, a byword of the countryside; yet for one moment she stood before him mystical, a sorceress, and he wondered if there were not help in her.

"Come on!" She tugged at him with triumphant energy. "It 's all plain as day — an' easy. See. I 've got the money that we — I 've got money enough. We 'll go to the American side, an' then to the cities,

an' it 'll be a week before they find it — him, there, in the bushes — so they 'll never get us in God's world. We 'd planned it already — but that was when I thought you did n't care. — An' the cities!" she cried. "That 's the place to live. I 'll show you, for I know 'em all. That 's where Jim found me first — Jim Barclay. The old fool! — old redheaded beast! Pah!"

She paused for breath, and, while the crickets were trilling in the damp grass, stroked his arm as if in consolation.

"Sakes, how strong you are!" she purred. "But you 're not like them. I 'm through with their kind now, honest, for good. They 're big babies along of you. Don't you see? Don't you see? — Oh, you quiet devil! The time we 'll have! — I never knew a man like you before."

Still Marden could not pull himself away from what at once quieted and angered him.

"A man like me?" he stupidly faltered. "Why — what"—

"That 's you all over!" cried the woman proudly. "Why, how many of 'em do you

s'pose there is nowadays would do what you done for the sake of a woman?"

Once more, as in that meeting on the beach, a light began to grow slowly in his mind. Just so a man underground might see, far ahead, the day glimmering in the mouth of some burrow.

He drew himself free, without violence or scorn. The blood running in his veins was his own again, under control.

"You 're right," he replied slowly, "right in a way. I begin to see — By the Lord, it *was* that! That 's a straw to catch at, anyway. There 's a chance, after all."

His tone showed that he had forgotten her.

"What are you after now?" she whipped out. "Don't go moonin' again, now we understand each other."

She made as if to put her hands on his shoulders, but he drew back, regarding her gravely.

"It 's queer,"— his voice, too, was very grave, and trembled, —"it 's queer to hear a murderer talk of conscience, and all that — but let Him judge, wherever He is. I 've

meant to do right, and — you see the fist I 've made. But now you 've made me see somehow, a little. It 's like, well — it 's as if a soldier (a stupid one, that 's me) lost a great battle — for the cause — the cause his whole heart 's in. That 's how it is. And the man's heart breaks, — but he loves the cause just the same, and loves the Commander, too, that puts him to death — you see, he deserves it. Hopeless wrong, that 's what I 've done; but something on the right side put me up to it."

"I don't know what you 're talkin' about, you queer thing," she said curtly. "But you 're wastin' time, anyway. Hurry up, for God's sake! I don't understand none o' that stuff, but this is right under our noses."

He shook his head sadly.

"A little while ago I might have killed you too. And now — why, it 's almost a debt you 've put me under. At least, — go on — go away — We 're all poor devils together — and how do I know how the two Commanders choose up beforehand? Go away, and let me think this out — it ain't much I

have left me — and I want to think it all out."

"What 's the matter?" complained the woman. "After you done all this for me — What d' ye mean?"

"For you?" he replied quietly. "It was n't for you."

"Not for me?" She gave an impatient and incredulous laugh. "Then who in the devil was it for?"

"A woman," he slowly answered, —"you never knew her, and I hope you never saw her. I can't name her name before — either of us. And yet I see now she 's way above any harm you or him or I might say or do against her."

With a sharp intake of breath that was almost a snarl, the woman advanced on him, quick and hostile.

"Do you mean that?" she cried, shrill with anger. "Do you understand what I know — what I can do, you fool? — an' I *will* do it, too. I 'm in a pretty fix now — when it was all for some other woman. Oh, you two liars, you an' him both — an' let me

go an' make a fool o' myself here — Oh, you great — you, you — oh, oh, oh!" She could find no words, but ran in close, pelted him viciously with her fists, then turned and bolted toward the town.

Marden neither felt her blows nor heard the sound of her running. He only knew that she had vanished. The darkness swallowed her up, and all memory of her. He was trying to feel his way out of this labyrinth before the tenuous clue should be withdrawn, or spin itself down to nothing in the dark.

"It was n't for such reasons as — as it might have been," he pondered. "If they 'll only give me time, I 'll follow this through yet, and get unsnarled, perhaps."

A soft breeze was drawing cool out of the west. The leaves of the poplar behind the house began to whisper shiveringly. High in the air, a firefly was blown down the wind, so that at the first glance he mistook it for a falling star. And in the sudden coolness Marden found himself thinking clearly and sweetly of his mother, whom he saw again as in the blue December dawn, with the fire-

light shining upward on the gentle face and the sad gray eyes. It was all very distant, and belonged not to him; but at all events the vision was there.

"She 'd understand even this," he thought. "Whether she ever forgave it or not, she knows what 's been fighting in my veins. That 's as much as a man deserves."

Through the trilling of the crickets and the soft patter of the leaves came the sound of a frog chunking away among the rushes of the little marsh behind the knoll, croaking his song, older than Aristophanes. Marden did not hear it, but he saw the ancient star hung in the east, and under the Great Bear the ghostly play of the Northern Lights, shifting in long faint streamers across the sky, showing a handiwork beyond all understanding.

He stood lost in wonder, filled with a grief as old as sea and land. Then he slowly faced about.

A light was coming from the village.

"The house," he said aloud, "it does n't matter now what happens to that, either."

The light came bobbing across the field.

It was a lantern, carried in the midst of a little group of people, who approached silently. He could see their legs moving dim in the path, and the long, black, magnified shadows crossing and recrossing, shearing the broad hillside.

Marden walked slowly down to meet them.

III

CAPTAIN CHRISTY

CAPTAIN CHRISTY

I

The harbor, brimful with the tide, was blue as morning sky, and motionless as high summer clouds. Along the grass-grown wharves, — silver-gray piles which crumbled at the ends into a jackstraw heap of rotting logs, — there was no human stir. Over one gray shanty the red ensign, a fold showing the yellow crown of Her Majesty's customs, hung limp from the staff. The thirty-foot flood had moved in imperceptibly, and lay, from the wharves to the distant islands, like a floor of steel. The masts of pinkies at their moorings plunged in deep, straight lines of black reflection, save where some profound, mysterious tremor of the tide shivered the mirror, and sent the phantom spars in wriggling fragments to the depths. A lone sandpiper, skimming the surface, mated with a flying shadow; and two or three, wheeling together, doubled into a little flock that

swerved, divided, and rejoined. The long water-front of gray houses, and behind them the treeless, empty street of pink sand, lay asleep in peaceful desolation.

The hum of voices, however, came from on board a small two-masted schooner made fast to a mouldering wharf. And on the sunny side of the mainsail, that was half hoisted to dry in the morning air, sat a little group of men in varied postures of idleness. A tawny-haired youth in a Scotch cap straddled the rail, spitting overside, kicking the woodwork sonorously, and fingering off the flakes of blistered paint. The others, all old men, basked on the cabin roof, sat on the bleached and ancient boom, perched on a coil of frayed hawser, or tilted back on chairs and boxes. All, except one, were men of a bygone generation, whose faces, placid and weather-seamed, and whose beards, of every cut, from the white, wide-forked whisker to the fiery chin-strap of Ireland, marked them for men who kept the ways of the old country. The one exception sat in a kitchen chair by the wheel, — a long-limbed old man, of quick eye and humorous

wrinkles, by every feature a Yankee among Canadians. His big, brown, cramped hands, tattooed with a blue five-spot at the fork of either thumb, whittled busily at a peg.

"Harbor-master sayed so, too," the old man with the forked beard was declaring, from his perch on the mainboom. "Sayed, ain't no vessel o' tonnage worth countun' ever clearrs out o' this porrt nowadays, or enterrs. An' it lies right in my own memory when they used to come in, brigs an' ships an' all, crowdud: carrgoes an' settlerrs!" The speaker waved his hand slowly, as in admiration of a broad picture. "An' the Loodianah would be sailun' from Liverrpool, bang up again this w'arf as ever was, a-landin' swarrms; an' Danny Eustis had a barr an' lodgun's right on ut, there where the timberr 's sunk in. Times has changed." He sighed, and letting his head sink, spread out the white flanges of his beard across his chest.

The youth who straddled the rail turned his freckled face toward the company, grinning malignly, as one adept in putting his finger on the main trouble.

"This schooner's the only thing bigger'n a pinky that 's seaworthy in the whol' bloomin' harbor," he sneered. "An' she ain't left her pier fer — how long is it, Cap'n Christy? — fer "—

The old Yankee at the wheel caught him up.

"Look here, Master Kibben," he said mildly, "I 'd ruther you 'd let that paint alon' there on that rail. Wear an' tear 'll take it off in time, 'thout you pickin' at it." The captain turned again to his contemporaries, sweeping their semicircle with candid blue eyes. "I hate to see folks frettin' an' piddlin' with their fingers," he explained. "If a man ain't anything to make, let him set still an' not distroy."

The youth, abashed, was left to drop pebbles overside and watch the circles that widened on the water and set the sunlight fluttering in oozy, volatile spots of brightness under the vessel's quarter. But his question had started other circles widening in the conversation.

"Why do n't you let her out to some one?" asked an old man who sat, with upright dignity, on the coil of hawsers. Of stiffer

carriage than the others, and dressed in worn tweeds, with a stock collar, a rusty black string tie, and across his stomach a small cable of blond hair braided into a watch-guard, he had an air of faded and uncouth smartness. His formal face, red nose, and smug white mutton-chop whiskers, wore the slow importance of the old school.

"Why don't you let her out?" he repeated. "Provided you 're not going to sea yourself, Captain Christy, if you understand me."

The captain understood. He bent over his whittling till only his white beard showed below the brim of the rustic straw hat. Now he looked up, quick and shrewd. The boy in the Scotch cap was grinning once more. Deliberately the captain pulled his tall body from the chair, walked to the cabin door, fitted the hasp on the staple, thrust in the half-finished peg, eyed it with displeasure, and tugged it out. Then he turned to the company. Under shaggy white eyebrows, a curious fold of wrinkles in the upper lids gave his eyes a triangular appearance. They were very blue, and sharp, and whimsical.

"Mr. Beatty," he said to his questioner, "ye ain't cal'latin' to let any rooms to boarders an' mealers up to your house, are ye?"

A slow shock ran through the group. This question to the chief gentleman, of the chief residence, in the seaport! Mr. Beatty, outraged, sat glaring and pursing his mouth rapidly in a bewildered effort to frame the reply tremendous.

"No?" the captain resumed kindly. "No. Now I thought ye would n't, somehow. Well, ye see, same way I would n't let no one else take this schooner a v'yage. She 's mine, has be'n so thirty-seven year; an' Zing Turner an' me has sailed her everywheres coastwise, an' for a bo't o' her tonnage, consid'able deep-water." The captain's glance wandered off, across the sunlit floor of the harbor, past the dark fir-crowned islets, toward the dazzling path that led to open sea. "No, sir," he concluded calmly, "if I can't take her out, no one else ain't goin' to." He sat down again by the wheel, and cut critical shavings from the peg; and when Mr. Beatty would have pursued the subject further, he stopped it

coldly. "If she went to sea, we all would n't be sittin' here enjoyin' life, for one thing."

Feet scuffed along the deck, and a newcomer, skirting the cabin, halted in the open space. He was a brown little man, of sun-dried aspect; under a drooping black rat-tail mustache his teeth gleamed in a row of golden "crowns;" and the dismal, hollow contour of his face seemed to denote a weary cynicism, until one saw the dull good-humor of his eyes. Sunken and opaque, they contained a smoky gleam, like bits of isinglass.

"Mornin', cap'n," he saluted, with an auriferous grin. "Say, the' ain't no weeck in the big lantrun. Kin I git one ashore, s'pose?" He spoke as if this schooner, idle for years, had just tied up at some bewildering foreign quay.

"Well, Zing," responded his captain, "you 'd ought to know by this time. But I guess you can git a weeck; — what between Tommy Carroll's rum-shop an' the town lockup, I guess you might git a fortni't."

A heavy chuckle moved round the company, ending in a belated explosion of laughter

from Bunty Gildersleeve of the forked beard. The mate was puzzled, then aggrieved.

"I don't touch a drop, cap'n," he appealed; "you know I don't, well enough."

"Course ye don't, Zing," the captain soothed him. "That was a joke."

The other returned serenely to his proposal:—

"Well, then I 'll git one fer the lantrun?"

"Do so, Zing." The captain, solemnly ratifying it, returned to his peg.

The lean little man hopped from rail to wharf, and shuffled off toward the street.

After him Mr. Beatty stared with disapproval. "There goes the biggest fool in town," he dogmatized.

"Oh, no, he ain't," objected Captain Christy. "Beggin' your pardon, he ain't. The' 's lots bigger fools, an' worse men, than Zwinglius Turner. He ain't quick, but he sticks by ye. He 's ben with me ever sence he was a orphan boy. An' while he ain't no navigator, he 's able, for things aboard ship, ropes an' taykle an' gear, right under his nose. O' course" — the captain smiled

indulgence. "Well, Zing Turner has ben sailin' round here an' — elsewhere,"— the captain waved generously towards the world, — "sailin' round for over twenty year, an' he don't know a landmark yet 'cept Hood's Folly Light, and that 's because his uncle kep' it all his life. I says to him one mornin' 'fore daylight, 'Where 's she layin', Zing?' an' says he, 'I-god, I dunno, cap'n, guess we 're off the Oak Bay River.' We was just passing L'Etang!"

His listeners laughed, slowly, incredulously.

"He don't so much as know their names yet," Captain Christy went on. "But for all that" —

The hollow bumping of an oar, and a hail from alongside, stopped the defense of Zwinglius.

"On deck, Rapscull'on!" croaked a hoarse voice. "Finnan haddies, all ready for the butter! Lobsters, praise the Lord, that 'll put hair on yer chest and joy in yer soul! Cap'n-Christy-God-bless-ye-brother-how-de-do? — Fresh clams, baked yisterday and dug to-morrer! — Ahoy!"

"Fisherman Gale 's in," said the captain.

The hoarse roar, which shattered the silence of the harbor, and reverberated along the water-front of gray shanties, came from a grizzled fisherman sculling a boat shoreward. Bending to his sweep, straddling a thwart smeared with blood and scales, a filthy giant in the bright sun, he stared up at the schooner's company, with black eyes shining fiery from an obscene tangle of gray elf-locks.

"The Good Lord bless ye," he croaked with a voice of despair. "May He keep ye all, bretherin. Haddick?"

The boat, rocking past, left a wake of ripples and a smell of fish stealing over the pale, hot surface of the harbor; the fisherman, bellowing to the empty street ahead, shot his offal-smeared craft under the Rapscallion's bowsprit, and made fast beside a rickety stair that mounted from the water into a patch of dusty burdocks. The men on the schooner left their host, the captain, and dispersed slowly, each one rising, stretching, clambering to the foot of the shrouds for a

clumsy leap to the broken string-piece of the pier. Lazy and old, they straggled away to group themselves again in the burdock patch; unmoved by the fisherman's harangue, they deliberated over their fish for dinner; and presently, in a slow and scattered file of ones and twos, through the wide, glaring street of pink sand, moved homeward, each swinging by a bit of rope-yarn a scarlet lobster or a pale, limp haddock.

All but Captain Christy: he remained leaning with elbows on the schooner's rail, staring hard into the green depths, where sunfish wavered past, vague disks of bending pulp. Once he shook his head as if something would never do; once he cast a slow survey over his vessel, from stern davits to round, apple bow, from the gray old planks underfoot up to the drooping dog-vane; but for a long time he leaned motionless, looking down at a black tress of seaweed in the water. At last, with something like a sigh, he turned away, and walked over to the cabin door.

He was staring at the finished peg in the staple, when Zwinglius Turner swung himself

aboard, flapping a white strip of lantern-wick, and grinning.

"Zing," the captain began with a stern face; then stopped, and winked as if a weighty joke were to follow. "Zing, that 's a fine mornin's work for a grown man."

The mate broadened his shining grin, much as a sleepy dog hastens the wagging of his tail at a word from the one beloved master. Then, after labor:—

"Better 'n nothin', cap'n," he retorted cheerfully.

"Yes, that 's it," said Captain Christy; "better 'n nothin'. Well, let 's lower away, Mr. Turner."

Together they lowered the dark mainsail, and made all snug. Deft, serious, a trans-figured helper, Zwinglius was everywhere at once, working with swift economy of motion. When he had carried the boxes and chair into the cabin, shut the door, and hammered the peg home with his fist, he turned to find his captain waiting at the side. The old man ran his big, brown hand, in one passionate gesture, down over his bearded cheeks. Under

the jutting penthouse fringe of white brows, his eyes were like dark pools with fire in them, — brightness playing over depth.

"Look here, you Zing Turner," he demanded harshly. "What d 'ye mean by stayin' round here, marooned-like in this sort o' town, doin' nothin'? For four year you ain't done a tap, 'cept this kind o' foolin'— playin' at ship — for four year. What d 'ye mean?"

The poor mate was stunned. He shifted his feet, looked up, down, and sidewise, fear slowly erasing his smile.

"Why, cap'n," he stammered. "Why, cap'n" — This sudden examination of a latent leading motive seemed to torture him. "Why — I dunno — why, I was jes' waitin' round till we went another voyage, cap'n — jes' kind o' "—

"That 's it!" cried the old man. "There ye are, again, waitin' round an' waitin' round. 'T ain't no use, an' you know it. This schooner 'll never put out no more, nor me neither. What 's the use o' pretendin' to wait? You know how She feels about it."

The tirade stopped short, the fierce look vanished. "Ye see, Zing," he continued, with gentle gravity, "we could n't go, very well. She would n't want to be left, sick an' all. Women hev some queer idees, an' hev to be humored. Ain't like ships. You 'ain't no wife, Zing, now, hev ye? — An' I 've kind o' promised. — It 's stay here, I guess."

As they left the wharf, a bell, somewhere in the town, broke into loud clamor. At the sound, a rusty Newfoundland dog, sole figure in the street, roused himself from a sunbath on the pink sand, howled funereally, and slunk off among the gray buildings.

"Noon — most dinner time," said Captain Christy. "Good-by, Zing. Same time to-morrer mornin'?"

"Yessir," said Zwinglius cheerfully. The sore subject would not be touched on for another fortnight. Where land and wharf met the two men parted.

"Pollick, cap'n?" roared Fisherman Gale, from his deserted market among the broken fish-flakes. He mopped his forehead with a red bandanna, then whisked away the flies.

"Pollick? Mackereel? — Glory amen! Shell clams an' finnan haddie! God bless ye, brother Christy! For His mercy indooreth forever!" he chanted in a hoarse rapture, to the silent village. "Satisfieth my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renooed like — like the American eagle, hey, cap'n? — I al'ays loved the dear old stars 'n' strikes. What 'll ye take home this noon? An' how 's yer wife, that blessed sister? — lookin' young an' handsome as a wax doll, but a dear true follerer."

The captain approached, dredging from a pocket his meagre handful of coins. He eyed the dirty fanatic with a mild pity.

"What's a haddie to-day, Cap'n Gale?" he said. "The Black Hawk minds her hellum jest as clever, I s'pose?" And, by the habit of patience, he listened through the fisherman's wild outpouring, — each symptom of his crazy schooner, and body, and soul.

. . . "Doubts an' backslidin's, an' turrible cracklin's in the drums o' my head, like fish a-fryin'. But I persevere a-sailin' alone, an' keep her on the lubber p'int for

heaven!" Gale concluded, and mopped his dirty beard.

Captain Christy nodded. Thrusting a big forefinger through the rope-yarn ring at the apex of the finnan haddie, and swinging his purchase meditatively, he moved away.

"Hold her to it, cap'n," he assented gravely. "That 's the course for all of us."

In a grass-grown lane among the side-streets he clicked a wooden gate behind him, traversed a gravel path between two rows of conch shells, and stood upon his own doorsteps. At the sound of his tread a woman's voice called fretfully from within the house: —

"So you 're back at last, after your gadding and gossiping? Time, I should say! Hope you 've enjoyed yourself, because I 've got a piece of news for you."

The captain shook his gray head wearily. On the iron bootscraper he cleaned his soles of imaginary dirt, and then entered the "front hall," stepping lightly on the checkered oilcloth.

In the sitting-room, from her pillowed chair beside a window-sill lined with vials, his wife

turned on him her heavy, sallow face and malevolent eyes. To her hooked nose she held a camphor bottle, which she fitfully lowered and clapped into position again.

"I 've made up my mind," she declared, between whiffs. "Now hark! You 've wasted enough time among those good-for-nothings. You must sell that old hulk of a schooner."

II

"Well, just keep on as you do, then," shrilled his wife, at the close of a week's debate. By main force of nagging she had beaten down the captain's good-humored defense and reduced him to a state of unnatural brooding. "Keep on." She raised pious glances to the ceiling: "You 'll only bring my white hairs to the grave."

They were really of a yellowish gray, screwed tightly up in unreverend knobs and horns; nor did their descent to the tomb appear more imminent than ever before in thirty years of hypochondria; but they served her rhetoric.

The captain, studying the fluffy plumes of dried pampas grass over the mantel, was moved to take a rare measure, and to his mind an ignoble.

"I don't want to talk about — anything I 've done, Carrie," was his apology: "but after stayin' home from sea so many year to please you, it ain't likely I 'll go leave you now. I ain't a boy," he suggested, with another vain appeal to humor, "I ain't a boy that can run away to sea no longer."

"Hark!" cried the invalid sharply. "Now who 's saying you were? What *I* complain of, and any woman would complain of, is for you to spend all your time aboard her, idling and gossiping, and leave your wife here alone at home."

This was Position Number Two. If he should reply that every morning, after an hour of frustrate conversation, she told him to clear out and let her rest a while, then the discussion would shift to Number Three: "A woman can't always sit and hear the same person saying the same things." This would lead easily to Position Four: "Neighbors? A fine lot of

neighbors!— Why did I ever come to live in this place, among such a set of people?" And that would be the last move; for Captain Christy, knowing the neighborhood opinion on this very point, had never found the heart to answer. Thus the game would end in a kind of stale-mate.

"It ain't worth arguin'," he sighed.

"Of course not," snapped his wife. "It 's only a question of my peace and health, or your idle pleasure."

And therefore, through another week of dreary weather, among her vials, and beside window-panes laced with raindrops or blanketed with white fog, she sat and argued sourly.

To know the forgotten, obliterated motives which, in that other world of the past, had joined these two in mutual captivity, would be to read tablets long expunged, to trace beach-wandering footprints after many tides, to restore the drifted volutes in last winter's snow. "How did *he* marry *her?*" was an old question of indignant, amused, or speculative neighbors; with no more answer than neigh-

bors have ever found to that mystery which — *saevo cum joco* — has for ages paired and shackled the unmatched of body and of spirit. Mrs. Christy herself wondered about it openly, redundantly, and with self-reproach; but her husband either saw no disparity, or was loyal to some youthful belief, some illusion of Rachel in the days before he woke to find that it was Leah.

Only once had he allowed himself a retort. As an exalted "U. E. Loyalist," the invalid passed all her reading hours among courts and coronets. Declaiming a paragraph about the Marquis of Lorne, she drew from the captain a cheerful admission: —

"Never heard of him."

"Never heard — !" she sniffed contemptuously. "Next you 'll say you 've never heard of the Queen!"

"Oh, yes," said the captain, "yes, I have. By all accounts, she must be a real nice old lady."

"You! — you!" cried the reader, choking. "You dare to speak of Her Majesty so! You — oh! You miserable — Yankee!" A wild

torrent of words followed: an angry lecture on irreverence, a more angry history of "my Family, the Defews," and how they had left "your vulgar Yankee colonies, to be loyal to the Crown."—"Oh, why did they let me marry such people?"

"People?" smiled the captain. "That 's bigamy, my dear."

"Oh," she moaned, "if I 'd only known what I was about!"

"Well," he replied slowly, "*I* had no idee I was marryin' the whol' Royal Family."

As days passed, the argument over the schooner grew acute and dangerous. Perversity, it may have been; or a cruel whim of the spleen; or, perhaps, that veiled force which moves below so much of human action,—jealousy. The captain was seen no more about the wharves; now and then, in brief appearance on the streets, he trudged heavily, like a workingman at the end of day, and studied the pink sand before his path, with a gaze deep, introverted, unseeing. There at his feet lay in question the last surviving joy of his life.

Once he stopped his former mate before the post office.

"Zing," he said pointblank, "what d' ye say if we 'd sell the vessel?"

Zwinglius looked at him shyly, embarrassed, silent, as at some high priest who might propound a sacrilegious riddle.

"Why," he faltered, "I dunno — What fer, cap'n?"

"May come to that," rejoined Captain Christy, and passed on, cloaked in sorrowful enigma.

The increasing storm in his house, and distress in his mind, made him spend a serene morning of Indian summer in painting his front steps. The house, shipshape with white clapboards and green shutters, stood out so trig and Yankee-fashion among the dove-gray houses of the town, that it might have looked too virtuous, too spruce, had not a vine traced runic patterns over the windows, and the sunlight, through a stalwart yellow birch, poured flickering changes along the whole front, like the play of kindly expression on a plain face. Nor did the steps, that

mounted from between the files of pearl-mouthed conch shells, need even a touch of restoration. But the captain worked slowly, painting them a vivid azure.

Tapping two brushes against an axe-helve, he had begun to spatter thick dots of black and white, when a voice calling made his tall frame straighten and turn toward the gate. "Good-morning, Captain Christy!"

Against the pickets leaned the slim body of a girl, and over them, like a hardy, trim-poised flower, her bare head, — a sun-browned face, gentle and serious, but lighted with merry eyes, and breezily crowned with willful brown hair.

"Mornin', Joyce," replied the captain, fixing on her a whimsical look, at once benevolent and stern.

"What are you doing that for?" she asked reproachfully, and pointed at the brushes and the bedaubed axe-helve. In guilty silence the captain laid them athwart his paint-bucket, and approached the gate.

"Oh, nothin'," he answered, looking paternally down at her face of mischief, and then

up airily at the heavens. "Sort of a kill-time. Lovely mornin', ain't it?"

"You bad old man," laughed the girl, threatening with a graceful finger. "'I have heard of your paintings, too.' Every time you paint, Father Captain, there 's something up, is n't there? — What are you fretting about now?"

"Oh, nothin'," repeated the mariner, like a schoolboy. With great artfulness he inquired, "What 's that book under your arm, Joyce? More fiddlesticks, I s'pose?"

His big, tattooed thumbs split open the stubborn pages.

"Humph! Verses," he commented. "Tell by the way they 're printed, — loose ends all to sta'board. What 's this?"

"It 's about a great sailor," said Joyce. He read aloud: —

> "'I am a part of all that I have met;
> Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.'

"Why, that 's *true!*" cried the old man. This, his tone implied, was the last thing to

have been expected. As he turned back and read the noble lines from the first, his eyes glistened, and above the white beard his cheeks slowly flushed.

"One o' the best things I ever read!" he declared recklessly. "Don't care if 't is a poem!"

At the close he sighed.

"Why, anybody might think jest like that, — a little fancy, p'raps, but — jest like that."

His brown fingers, bent over many a rope, cramped at many a helm, closed the book gently.

"Read as much o' him as you like, my girl."

Joyce laughed, but her brown eyes, watching the heavy-hewn old face above her, shone as with young love and worship of a sage. These chats with the captain were somehow like glimpses of communion with the father and mother whom she had been too little to know: in her vision he remained, through the faith-shaken trials of her youth, "like a great sea-mark standing every flaw."

"Father Captain," she said, after a silence, "what *were* you painting again for?"

"Oh, well," he answered, with an uneasy shift, "ye see, She 's kind o' poorly. Took to her bed again."

"Oh, I 'm sorry," replied the girl. Her manner became constrained and timid. "Is — is there anything I can do? I 'd come in and see her if — if there was."

Both understood the futility of that offer.

"No, thank ye, Joyce," said the captain. "Don't know the' is. Thank ye. How 's the organ play now, sence I mended it?"

"Oh, it 's beautiful," she cried, with evident relief. "You made it almost like new. There 's only one bad wheeze now. You stopped the worst rumble."

"That 's good," he said. "I 'll come hear ye play nex' Sunday, — if She 's all right by then."

He watched the girl as with light-footed swing she passed down the grass-grown street. "Clears the ground like — like a filly," he grumbled, his eyes twinkling affection.

"It makes me want to cry!" Joyce told herself, while she hurried along, her cheeks glowing and her fists clenched. "Taken to her bed! That old Dragon! Ugh!"

When she had turned a corner, the captain moved heavily back to the steps and bent again to his task of spattering.

Once he straightened up, to look dreamily toward the harbor, where aslant a sunken ridgepole and tumbled chimney rose a well-beloved topmast.

"Hum! That sailorman," he mused, — "Ulysses, she said it was, — would n't mind doin' like him. . . . Left his wife, though, did n't he? Humph! Not for me, no more."

The careful process of maculation finished, he made a barrier of two kegs and a plank, with large letters — "P-A-I-N-T"— to warn a neighborhood whose habit of calling there had ceased years ago.

When he entered, a peevish voice issued from the open door of the bedchamber.

"I s'pose you expect me to sleep all this time? — Tap-tap-tap! rap-rap-rap! — what were you puttering about?"

"Paintin' the steps," said the captain serenely.

"Painting the steps!" came a scornful echo. "Hark!— They don't need it more 'n the cat needs another tail!"

The captain maintained a long silence. He added a stick of maple to the parlor fire, then took a letter from his pocket, and stood reading. The single sheet appeared to require study; at last he shook his head and drew a weary breath. His next attempt at cheerfulness was plainly forced.

"Might be kind o' fun to have it, though," he remarked.

"What?" called the invalid; and after a pause, fretfully, "Have what?"

"Another tail," said the captain, in an absent voice, scanning his letter again.

A mutter of impatient words — "sense" . . . "second childhood" . . . "idiot" — came from the sickroom. The captain's great shoulders squared in a slow, patient heave, as he smoothed the page. It ran in crabbed scrawl, along guide-lines ruled in pencil:—

SQUAW POOL MASCARENE ISLD.

CAPT. CHRISTIE, ESQ, —

dear sir, yrs. of 16eth to hand and contents noted, in reply will start wensday fortnit per stmr. Auroaria and take schr. at yr. termes as per yrs. of 16eth. and wd. say, wd. hev ansd. soonar but ben suffring from stummick troble but she will suit me fine for smoakwood trade so hopeing you are well I will close from

Yr. Obdt. Servt.

JNO. FOLLANSBEE.

To every man, except smug and petty persons ignored by destiny, comes at least one message — a friendly letter, a passing whisper in a crowded room, a shrewd, cold document clicked off in purple type, the word of a breathless runner, a speech-mangled telegram, or a shout from a boat alongside in the dark — to strike a blow which is the be-all and the end-all for some cherished way of life. More than once he reads the written decree, or in echoing memory hears the spoken; and while coming to believe and deeply understand that a strange hour has struck, that his

life has swung into a new cycle whose grief lies onward and whose joy behind, he must — alone, with the thing in his pocket or the words in his head — work at a desk, or navigate a ship, or chat with strangers, or walk floors, or sit in theatres, or paint steps. Slowly, therefore, but with fixed heart and equal mind, the captain had accepted his message in its finality.

"I don't see exac'ly how I 'll do without her," he reflected. His tall bulk filling the little window, he looked out once more at the distant topmast, and summarized the remainder of his old age. "It 'll be like — like haulin' in on a slack rope — with nothin' at the end. But I must 'a' ben kind o' selfish, frettin' Her about it so long."

Treading lightly, he entered the sickroom, to make his offering.

"Well, Carrie," he announced jovially, "guess this 'll interest ye."

"I 'm not deef," replied his consort, who sat propped among pillows, her sallow, hostile face appearing, under a white nightcap, like the sinister freak of some ill-omened mas-

querade. "I 'm not deef. You no need to shout so." She frowned upon the letter for a space. "Well, you 're lucky," she continued. "He must be a fool, to want that hulk. What a scribble!— Take it away; it hurts my eyes. Ever going to bring me something to eat? If I can have anything that 's fit to touch, I may get up this afternoon."

Thus, past the grimace of many a strange idol, the smoke of sacrifice mounts to the true acceptance.

III

Inside the cabin, neatly sombre with dark brown woodwork, it was neither day nor night. An old brass lamp against a bulkhead, stirring in the gimbals at the petty shock of harbor waves, cast a tremulous evening glow on the Mongol face of Zwinglius Turner, who sat on the lower stairs; but the venerable, rough head of the captain, who stood upright, caught a dull gleam — slanting down from tiny barred windows frost-white with fog — as from some wintry, dungeon-like dawn. The captain's air was of business and re-

flection; the mate's that heavy, embarrassed gloom, half melancholy decorum and half fidgets, seen in figures who line the walls at a rustic funeral.

His master contemplated a picture that he had just unscrewed from the bulkhead, — a discolored likeness of a patient, heroic face.

"Ab'ram Lincoln," he said, laying it on the table. "Follansbee won't want him. I do."

He stooped into the warm lamplight and shadow of the lower level, rummaged in a locker, and, drawing out various treasures, heaped them on the table.

"Now this"— it was an ancient swallow-tail burgee, red and white — "I 'll ask him if I can keep this. . . . Spare lead-line, — well, that 's part o' the fittin's; that 's his." A bundle of old saffron pamphlets thumped the table, and sent up a thin cloud of dust. "Leave him those for readin', — Farmer's Almanacs: the back of 'em has rafts o' good riddles and ketches." Then followed a small graven image in black tamarind wood, handfuls of cowrie shells, a shark-tooth necklace, a

fly-whisk, the carved model of a Massoola boat, a Malay kriss, a paper of fish-hooks, and a brass telescope. The captain's hands ransacked the farthest corners of the locker; they stopped suddenly; his face became very grave.

"Can't have this, anyway," he said, in a voice changed and troubled. He drew forth a red and blue worsted doll, badly stained, with one boot-button eye. "No, by James Rice, he can't!" muttered the captain passionately. He sat down on the edge of his bunk, as in the black mouth of a crypt, and, bunching his beard in one gnarled fist, regarded sadly the absurd puppet in the other.

"I never expected to take this out again, somehow," he said, in a vacant tone of soliloquy. "She put it away in there herself — nigh on to forty year ago. You don't go so far back, do ye, Zing? I remember when it fell overboard; young Kit Chegwidden over after it. My, how Eunice cried! Then she kissed him for savin' it. A clever boy, Kit: master o' the Jennie Gus now, and children of his own. Time goes quick" —

The old man, still grasping the doll gently,

stared downward as if through the floor shadows he saw into the deep void of the past.

"Don't think I could 'a' stood ever seein' St. Thomas again after that"—

He was thinking of the only voyage his wife had made with him, and of Eunice, their only child. With solemn inward vision, evoked by the touch of a lank worsted doll, he recalled the sultry nights of watching and heartbreak in this very cabin, the flush of the fever in the child's cheeks, the gleaming disorder of her bright hair on the pillow, the glare of tropic sun on a white-hot deck, their silent group at the rail, the trembling of a little black book, the lofty words of consolation, so hard to read aloud, so much harder to believe when that frail object, intolerably precious, was committed to the unstirring, blank, august emptiness of ocean.

"Zing, I can 't bear to sell her," whispered the old man. Fumbling as if blind, he put away the doll in a breast pocket. "I can't bear to."

Zwinglius cleared his throat, said nothing, shifted his boots. In a heavy silence that

grew tangible, he rose and slowly withdrew up the stairs, disappearing in a cloudy square of white which the closing door blotted out noiselessly.

The captain, alone, sat staring down into the dark pool of bygone years.

Outside, stumping hoofs passed slowly down the pier, a clatter of loose planks, and the doleful mooing of cattle. Shouts rose: "Gangway there! Hurrup!" Footsteps pounded the deck, and past the window broad shadows flitted, swiftly intersecting. But Captain Christy sat oblivious; not until the door flew open with a resounding jar, and in the haze above stood a pair of short, heavy-booted legs, did he slowly rise from his dream.

"Sour and thick!" shouted a hoarse voice. A burly little man began to clamber down, driving before him into the lamplight a thin aureole of fog. "Sour and thick!" he muttered, as he gained the floor. Unwinding a shepherd's muffler, he disclosed a swarthy, black-bearded face and twinkling eyes. "Sour and thick, Cap'n Christy! A spewy day.

Joe e'enamost drove his cows over the bank. But I 'll git her off now — ketch this ebb — drop down 's fur as Lord's Nubble: one cow for the lightkeeper there — find my way that fur blindfold, so long 's she can cut the fog, hey?" He laughed, as if at a pleasant fancy.

These plans for an alien future seemed hardly to touch the captain's mind.

"The' 's some things there on the table, Cap'n Follansbee," he said quietly. "Anything you don't want kep', I 'll take home."

"Curios, hey?" boomed the new master. He grinned at them like a good little pirate disdainful of plunder. "No, no, cap'n! Souverins o' foreign parts, eh? No, no, you keep 'em all. Good snug cabin, this, — fustrate!"

"Well, those almanacs," urged the captain, stowing the keepsakes away in spacious pockets. "Now you take those, go ahead. Ain't noo, o' course, — ketches and rebuses just as good, — lots o' facts, too."

"All right. Thank ye," said the other heartily. "I do n't care. They 'll keep my mind from evil thoughts."

"Time I was ashore," Captain Christy mumbled. He searched the cabin with one long look, as though to add this last to the scenes that thronged in his old memory; then preceded his brother mariner up into the fog.

At the rail the two shook hands. Captain Christy looked down, with lips compressed, as if something hurt.

"She 's a clever bo't, Cap'n Follansbee," he said. "Treat her kind, now, won't ye?" And he swung himself over to the pier.

"Like — like a kitten!" shouted the younger man, already busied with ropes. "Here, Joe, ye stootchit, bear a hand with the spring!" The gap widened between her side and the pier-spilings. "Like a kitten!"

For the first time in years the schooner moved slowly outward along the wharf. A tow-rope over her bow rose taut, fell slack, — jerking from out the heart of the fog the smoky outline of a boat with waving oars, — rose dripping, and ran taut again into blank whiteness. Captain Christy, Zwinglius, and a knot of loungers walked alongside the ship

out to the final snub-posts. Her stern loomed large, grew veiled and insubstantial, dissolved, and with the "chock-chock" of oars and lowing of disconsolate cows, the Rapscallion had become a name and pictured vanity of the past. The breath of her departure swept their dim group on the pier, in ponderous-rolling smoke as of some cold, noiseless battle.

"Why did n't ye go with her, Zing?" said the captain suddenly. "Follansbee promised me to offer ye the place."

The mate turned his face away; but for the first time in history he made a blunt answer.

"Did n't want to," he declared. This plunge made him dare another boldness. —"Come on home now, cap'n. No more to see."

"Well, cap'n, all over," called Bunty Gildersleeve, lurching up beside them, his beard a frosty silver with the damp. "Ye know, I kind o' miss her already. W'arf don't seem the same."

"Do ye?" replied Captain Christy, in a dazed fashion. "Yes, that 's so." He stared

into the fog. "All over," he repeated mechanically.

As he tramped homeward, the noon bell tolled dismally. School children, cowed by the cold mist, pattered by in a solemn little flock. Through the obscurity heaved a larger blur,—Joyce, their teacher, herding them.

The captain's vacant answer to her hail, his apathy as they walked on together, made Joyce linger at the gate to ask:—

"How is Mrs. Christy to-day?"

"Better, thank ye. 'Pears to be all right now, for some little time. Thank ye. Up and about, ye know."

"That 's good," said Joyce. After a pause she asked: "Oh, captain, is it true, what they tell me, that you 're going to sell the schooner?" Her tone and aspect were of the utmost innocence.

"Hev sold it," he replied curtly. As she had hoped, he caught no drift between her two questions; but the cloud that settled over the kind old face made her repent of the strategy. "She went out this mornin's ebb," he continued. "Got a fair price, though."

Joyce had to break the silence.

"I 'm glad Mrs. Christy 's feeling better," she ventured lamely. "Has she — did she get outdoors on any of those pleasant days last week?"

"She don't go out much any time," said the captain with regret. "That 's why she seems so much better now — better 'n I 've seen her for a long time — talks o' goin' to visit Up the Line."

As this phrase meant anywhere between Cape Sable and Toronto, Joyce looked puzzled.

"Her fam'ly, the Defews," he explained. "She 's kep' writin' to 'em — I mean," he added in confusion, "they 've kep' writin' to her to come up and visit. She says we can afford it now that — afford it better 'n we could."

The girl's eyes grew very wide and round.

"Of course you 'll be going too?" she conjectured.

"Me?" said the captain, amazed; "Lord, no!"

Some strong emotion, following all this enlightenment, compelled Joyce to cut their interview short.

"I hope she 'll enjoy it." She spoke stiffly, and turned away, prim with self-restraint. "Good-morning, captain."

"Now what did I say to make her mad?" wondered Captain Christy, watching as the fog veiled and enveloped her. "I 'm sorry — Humph!— Funny critters."

Still perplexed over this, and downcast from the morning's work, he navigated among the autumnal stalks in the little garden, stopped to see if his hydrangea had shaken off its last petals, and then, skirting round to the back door, entered his workshop. Here a bench, of spinster-like neatness, ran athwart a noble confusion: old coats, oilskins, boots, lined the walls like votive offerings after shipwreck; in the window a frigate-bird, badly stuffed, perked a vicious bill as if to puncture the balloon breast of a dried sea-robin; and in the corners, over the floor, on shelves, lay heaps of nautical rubbish, — bits of chain, pots of dried paint, resin, and tar, broken oars,

coiled ropes, and a mound of gear — double, clew-line, long-tackle, and snatch-blocks, — like a cairn raised to mark an ended activity.

The captain had emptied his pockets of their "souverins," and, with one hand thrust in breast-high, was considering where to bestow the worsted doll, when the door from the kitchen opened, and Mrs. Christy stood looking in. Fortune, good or ill, had chosen this heavy-hearted moment of the captain's meditation.

"Who was that you were talking to?" she demanded, curiosity qualifying the wonted disapproval in her tone.

"Oh, that was Joyce," replied the captain, from a distance of thought.

"Again!" snapped his wife. A shadow of ill-will gathered on her heavy features. "Always gadding round with her, or some young woman. At your age of life, too!"

For the first time in many days, the captain's temper sounded in his voice.

"Come, Carrie, don't be foolish," he commanded sharply. "Don't say things you don't mean." He spoke more gently: "Joyce

is a fine girl, and I 'm master fond of her. Seems like a daughter, — a'most."

"Oh, so I 'm a fool, am I?" inquired Mrs. Christy with bitterness. "Thank you. And next I s'pose you 'll remind me we have n't any children of our own" —

"Carrie," interrupted the old man, with a sad look, indescribable and penetrating. The faint color of aged, wintry emotion flushed in his cheeks above the white beard. "I did n't think you 'd speak like this — rememberin'— well, rememberin' little Eunice."

Thus began another causeless battle, obscure, long-drawn, unworthy, involved in everyday matters, acts, words, looks, silences, trivial in themselves, but — as hovel, or hedge, or waterhole in greater warfare — invested with the unhappy dignity of conflict. The captain craved only peace; it was his wife who found the pretexts and broke the truces, with the aimless, chronic hostility that had become her nature and occupation.

The townspeople had already discussed her projected visit "Up the Line;" as bare autumn was freezing into winter they learned, with

the gradual shock of placid minds, that she had gone, declaring her purpose never to come back. "If she said it, she 'll keep her word," the gossips decided, with deep knowledge of her character. Witnesses who had watched her embark in Sam Tipton's stage proved that she had said it repeatedly, loudly, in glib succession.

"She won't come back," Sam deposed, with a valedictory oath. "Am I sure? Hope so, anyway. I hat to drive her twenty mile."

Zwinglius Turner, when first cornered, was unsatisfactory. "No — that 's right — she 's gone fer good," he stammered, with a shy, golden grin. But his wish was too plainly father to that thought.

The captain himself supplied the final evidence. One chill and sparkling November day Mr. Gildersleeve found him pacing the empty wharf. His step was laggard, his carriage perceptibly older, and, though on a week day, he bore his Malacca stick with the carbine-cartridge ferule.

"The sea is powerful callin', ain't it?" he asked thoughtfully. Side by side they looked

across the dancing sunlight of the harbor to the black fir islands patched with snow. "Powerful callin'. The' 's lots o' clumsy beggars aboard o' bo'ts, too — Ye know Bunty, the roughest part is, I might jus' as well kep' the vessel, *after* all."

It was the first time that his friend had ever heard him speak bitterly.

IV

The swift invasion of winter had changed the cosy village, and the autumnal land whose Northern strength was more than beauty, into a huddling camp, a bare, angular outpost against cold desolation. The harbor lay dull and blackened, as though winter-killed; scattered islets shone like alabaster domes of drowned mausoleums; along the foreshore the wharves ran in bony snowbanks across gleaming slopes and valleys of thin, sallow ice, which, at the hidden work of tides in clear morning silences, surprised the bleak solitude with little, far-heard noises of straining, crashing, tinkling, as if invisible wanderers among the hummocks were to smash through

areas of glass. At long intervals the dirty sails of a schooner crawled along the lifted skyline. The ragged granite of the mountains, sharp against an Italian blue of winter skies, bore white symbols, gigantic and undecipherable; their sides were burnt brown, charred bitterly, cut with long scars of snow; from their bases the bare hills, ridged with undulating spines of buried fences, and rearing now and then the Christmas spire of a lonely evergreen, sloped away to the glitter of the fields and the pink haze of lowland alders. Only the promontories ran their great nebs down into the sea, steadfast in stern verdure, scorning to change with seasons or with centuries.

For hours, for half-days, nothing stirred in the main street of the seaport, except a wraith of powdery snow. The ocean wind, on howling nights, had by the freaks of its own will heaped drifts against windows, or swept the frozen road bare to the fossil hoofprints from the age of summer. Rarely, and strangely as if down and out from the painted vista of a stage background, appeared a man trudging, a mittenful of snow held to his ear, and his

beard fringed with shapeless beads of ice. Such figures, without exception, paused under a wooden boat that threatened the path from above a window where a lighted lamp kept the frost melting. They kicked the snow from their heels, and entered.

Mr. Laurel's shop was a winter club by day and night. He was a ruddy, solemn little cobbler, whose leather apron bulged over a comfortable stomach, and round whose ear coiled always a "waxed end." Inordinate smoker and debater, local authority on music, he shone in these long days when — as Bunty Gildersleeve expressed it — there was "nuthin' but sit by the fire and drink whiskey and tell lies." Whenever discussion drooped, some one called out, "Give us a toon, now, come." And Mr. Laurel, washing his hands with an extravagance of soap and drying them fastidiously on the shop towel, opened an ancient case in a corner, and sat down before his musical glasses. He waved circles of practice in the air, bent over, and, touching the clustered rims reverently, drew forth thin, vocal harmonies of surprising sweetness. The

concert always began with "Home, Sweet Home" or "Forsaken;" always ended with "Old Black Joe," when the artist, swaying backward, was lost in his work. "You can hear ut sayin' the words," he breathed, yearning with tearful rapture toward the ceiling. The audience, respectful, soothed, in wreaths and layers of thick smoke from clay pipes, formed a circle of serious, weatherbeaten faces, of big legs crossed luxuriously, of protruding boot-toes that gently waggled to the rhythm of the harmonica.

Their talk circumnavigated the realms of free speculation: what best cured the bots; whether King Solomon might not have known about electricity; whether hairs could be changed to water-serpents; whether heroes of the Fenian raid should have medals; what might be the properest way of building a weir; whether ministers were better than other folks; and what place good dogs have in the Hereafter.

Frequently upon these abstract thoughts broke in a loud scuffle and a hoarse muttering at the door, and old Gale the fisherman

stumped in, filthy, red-eyed, bearded with icicles, strangely invested in a chafed leathern reefer and a bell-crowned silk hat, like some Ancient Mariner of low farce.

"Hallelujah!" he croaked inconsequently, shifting a feeble glare about the room. "Rejoice, bretherin!"

"Mornin', doctor," they replied. "How the patients this cold spell?"

"Healt the sick and cast out divils," recited the old man, as if struggling hoarsely against a storm that defeated his shouts. "Causin' the blind to walk and the lame to clap their hands. No credit to me, bretherin. Providence done it. Praise the Lord! Who 's got a fig o' tabacca?"

To become a doctor was the fisherman's mode of hibernating. A fat book — "Cost me five dollar!" he roared — which contained as frontispiece an M.D.'s diploma perforated at the edge, to be torn out and framed; a black oilcloth bag, holding bottles and boxes, "Opydeldock, hartshorn, medder-sage, black cohosh, tinction o' nitre, arnicky;" and a tall, rusty silk hat which called forth reminiscences

of Mr. Beatty as a young bridegroom, — with nothing more, he annually joined the noble army of Hippocrates. The wonder was that, although these sources of his dignity were simple and known, the doctor found a patient or two nearly every season. The first reproach of all physicians he had silenced this winter, by healing himself: "them turr'ble cracklin's in the drums o' my head, I stopped 'em all with the marrer of a hog's jaw."

"Jawbon' of an ass, ye mean," growled Bunty Gildersleeve. But even he was impressed by the historical fact that old Mr. Lightborn, a farmer Up the Line, had sent down a homemade diagnosis of his daughter's case, when she had shown a distressing fondness for "a idel, dangers man, a drunkart and a gamboler."

"I sent 'er a love-philtre," bellowed the doctor. "Took it in her tea and knew no better! Fixed 'er up! Hallelujah!"

And indeed, all knew that Miss Lightborn had shortly transferred her passion to a quiet young man of considerable property, out on the Ridges.

Or perhaps, when the medical fisher had been quieted with the loan of a tobacco-pipe, their talk wandered into foreign lands. Captain Christy came in seldom now, and said almost nothing; so Mr. Gildersleeve, second only to him as a great traveler, bore off the honors.

"And so we run clos' in, and fired our muskuts right amongst the bazzarr there on the shore, and wore ship and stood out to sea," he would conclude.

"But how could ye git along," propounded the skeptical Mr. Laurel, "in them foreign places where they dunno how to talk?"

"Learnt the lingo," drawled the story-teller scornfully. "Wha 'd ye think? Follerin' the sea, a man picks up lots o' the dead languages."

"Give us some Dutch," challenged a listener.

"Wee gates," said Bunty, with readiness. "Much as to say, 'How 's the boy?'— I know some Spanish, too."

"Let 's hear ye," scoffed the cobbler, in a tone of profound unbelief.

"Addy Oats," was the reply.

"Who 's she?" asked several voices.

"Way them Dons says 'good-by,'" he explained. "And they go fricasseein' round with therr hats, so — Many the time I watched 'em doin' ut in Barrcelony."

"What 's the French like?" another demanded.

"Quiddlety," pronounced the linguist.

"Oh, get out with ye," cried Mr. Laurel, plying an awl contemptuously. "'T ain't. I 've heard 'em myself, up at Troy's Pistols one summer. 'T ain't the least bit like ut."

"Captain Christy," appealed Mr. Gildersleeve with dignity, "ain't that how the Crapos ask ye what time o' day ut is? Come, now."

The captain roused slowly from another revery; his vision returned to present objects, and with absent-minded tolerance he replied: "Yes, that 's right, so fur 's I know, Bunty."

But his face seldom lighted nowadays; he soon withdrew into caverns of deep-eyed silence; and perhaps would neither speak nor stir again until the clangor of the noon bell startled the winter air and broke up their

morning session. Even when he returned to the cottage, which he and Zwinglius now kept together by strict rule of shipboard, his unshared thought still enfolded him as clouds about a mountain castle.

Though all the village noticed this change, none grieved so heartily as Joyce. On Sundays, from the tiny organ-loft of the church, she looked down with ineffectual pity on the tall figure below, the broad, spare shoulders slightly bent, the great white head, anointed with a wine-red stain from a window-shaft of sunlight. And when at her touch "St. Ann's" quavered from the doddering organ, she listened for the brave old bass that vibrated beneath the other voices, strong as a deep-sea current: —

"Time like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away:
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

. . . . . .

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

Yes, thought the girl as she played, he was

without fear and strongly comforted; but the youthful sense of justice rebelled within her, and, forgetting the stern conditions of this our race, she wondered why he, who kept the faith, could not finish the course without the burden of a late sorrow. She longed for a chance to lighten it.

And so when one day the captain, chopping a frozen log, cut his foot with a glancing blow, it was not wholly a misfortune. With an excuse to leave her lodgings at Mrs. Gildersleeve's, she at once moved into the captain's house, took charge, and managed the restless prisoner like a child.

"Now don't you dare," she commanded, before each morning tramp to school, "don't you dare take it down off that chair! Stand by!"

"Aye, aye," returned the captain comfortably. He sat by the window, the bandaged foot elevated on cushions, and one of her books at his elbow. "Stand by it is, marm!" And when she reached the gate again at noon, a big hand waving in the window showed him still at his post.

It was a happy time in the little house: the cloud descended sometimes on the captain, but more rarely and briefly. There were long evenings when Zwinglius rolled out to gather news at Laurel's; when age and youth sat together trading confidences, slowly, with many intervals; when the clock ticked, the Northern Spies roasted sputtering between the andirons, the wood fire purred for snow, or a frosty nail started like a pistol shot in the night.

"And now why," Joyce questioned, as if their talk had not faltered, "why do they seem to think young people are always happy, and all that? I think we 're more perplexed and troubled than older ones, and selfish — Yes, I do — and — and often cruel."

"Oh, that 's all right," declared the captain, nodding wisely, as if to dismiss a trifle. "Ye must enjoy yourself while you 're young. 'T ain't right not to. And then when ye git to be old — well, the' 's lots o' nice things about bein' old, too. Lots. Only fault I got to find with it is that things won't stop a while for ye — only a — sort o' — breathin' spell

while ye can watch everything jest as 't is — and see friends happy, and — No; things clip right along. That 's all seems hard. They don't stop nor stay for ye."

The hand of the tall clock crawled through a quarter circle before either spoke again.

"Now me," the captain mused. A burnt log crashed into a ruin of rosy coals that lit up his whimsical smile. "I ben master sulky these days. Ever sence I sold the vessel — and She went."

Joyce reached up from her hassock, and captured one of his big fingers on the chair-arm.

"Master sulky," he continued. "The Book says, 'There remaineth a rest.' I know, too. That 's so. But not yet, ye see, not right now. Work — that 's what I want. As young 's I ever felt, and can't give up the sea yet a while. Why, ye would n't think, Joyce, the time I lay awake nights thinkin' how much I want to go another v'yage or two."

"I wish you could," said the girl sorrowfully.

"P'raps I may, some time," he responded. "Kind o' hev a feelin' it 'll come about. Now, if I had a ship this minute a-layin' at the foot o' King Street in St. John, why, Wood and Guthrie 'd give me a cargo. Yes, sir! They know me. That 's what 'ud happen. Hmm! So good 't won't come true."

Although the lame foot soon grew sound again, they found their evenings too pleasant to forego. The captain begged, worthy Mrs. Gildersleeve took his side, and Joyce was glad enough to remain in what seemed to be her first home. The winter crept along, through blind storm and freezing brightness.

One day, as Captain Christy sat at breakfast, Zwinglius darted in, stuttering: —

"She-she-she — she 's nosin' round galley-west and crookit, cap'n! Nobody can't make out what she 's aimin' fer to do!"

"Who?" the captain asked severely.

"Why, this here ship," stammered the mate. "She 's a-gormin' round the bay, — three ways fer Sunday."

The captain strode to the entry, fought his way into an overcoat, hauled down the ear-

laps of his enormous cap, and marched outdoors. The mate trotted behind him down the windswept road, dangling a brace of fat overshoes, which he begged the captain to put on.

Puffs of light breeze chased thin snow-veils along the petrified ruts, twirled them upward in faint spirals, strewed them suddenly broadcast. A white hill that bared its smooth contour beyond the town smoked with vapors of snow that — clinging close as the steam about the body of a sweating horse — rose slowly, and shifted against the lemon glare of an arctic sun. Beyond the foot of the slope, where the dead vista of the street broke wide upon the harbor, a brigantine lay motionless, in stays, her scant canvas sagging in black-shadowed wrinkles.

A knot of men watched her from the verge of the yellow beach ice.

"What d' ye think, cap'n?" called Bunty, as the two approached. "What kind o' didos they cuttin' up aboard her? See, there they go ag'in!"

The brigantine fell off on a short, aimless

leg as if to run down a group of landward isles, slatted up in irons again, came about on the opposite tack, made nothing but leeway, and at last, — when the company of numb watchers, beating arms and stamping, had turned away in disgust from her drunken repetition, — she suddenly went off, caught the wind abaft her beam, and stood out to sea.

All morning speculation ran riot at Laurel's; and when, that afternoon, the brigantine reappeared, to knock about as before, they could have pitched their excitement no higher for Captain Kidd and his Jolly Roger.

"If she wants to stave a hole in her bottom" — began Captain Christy; he stopped short, and spoke no more that afternoon, but with shining eyes paced back and forth, fidgeted, chuckled strangely. His conduct, amazing his friends, added to the day's mysteries.

While the sun was still two hours aloft, a boat put off from the brigantine, pulled shoreward, and landed a solitary passenger, — a mean-faced little man in pea-jacket and hip-boots. He scornfully asked for the telegraph

office, cursed it for being twenty miles away, bought a pint of whiskey, and drove off with Sam Tipton's boy in a pung. The two sailors who had rowed him were of the city-bred type, and remained unsociable even after rounds of drink. "Yes, he 's mate o' the Amirald," they said gruffly. "An' a bum one, too. An' she wants a tow, an' he 's gone to telegraph up river for a tug, an' by God, that 's all you Reubens pumps out o' us. Hey, whiskers?"

When nine o'clock passed, and no captain came to supper, Joyce began an anxious expedition. A piercing sea wind, in sudden, wrestling gusts, filled her cloak, raged at her skirts, checked her as though against the bellying of an invisible sail; then dropped, was gone, and left all things without breath or movement, except the high stars racing through rifts into blackness. In such pauses she caught now and then a hoarse bellow, a deep, throbbing bass note in the distance.

In the pathway of light from a window she met the captain, marching with head erect and face radiant.

"You sinner!" she scolded, taking his arm. "Why did you worry me, wandering round on such a bad, raw night?" .

"That 's all right," he boomed, in a voice of exhilaration. "She 's never showed a light, — nary a flicker! An' there 's the tug tootin' round for her! Not a flicker!"

The hoarse whistle sounded again in the stillness. Far out, a green coal moved over the face of the waters; a red coal joined it; both gleamed lustrous for a moment; then, with a bellow, the green vanished.

"Try again!" the captain advised satirically. "P'raps the Amirald 's short o' karosene!"

"What 's it all about?" asked the girl, tugging him homeward. "What have you been up to all this time?"

"Moon-cussin'," explained the culprit. "Jest a little moon-cussin'. In a few days I 'll tell ye, p'raps." He listened for sounds in a chill gust that staggered them. "Good noos, I think, Joyce girl. Aye, aye, home it is, then."

V

On calm April days, — when the buff fields, restored to sunlight, began to be furred with a faint green; when the last forgotten snow-drifts were sparsely inlaid in the dark north banks of nook-shotten isles, mountains, or headlands, and over the black bay cakes of river-ice floated seaward; when the lee of every gray house sheltered a patch of reviving turf spangled with the broad goldpieces of dandelions, and every flaw of wind brought smells of wet earth and brushwood smoke, — a visitor might have thought that the past also had been reborn. For alongside the wharf, in the Rapscallion's bed, lay a vessel, from the deck of which, on warm noons, rose the hum of voices. The men were as before, and above them, as before, reared the massive head and shoulders of Captain Christy. But time had not been cheated: things were not the same. Slanting yards crossed the vessel's foremast; her lines were bolder, more dashing, than those of the beloved schooner; and on board, instead of holiday chat in the sunshine, there

sounded busy hammering, pounding, overhauling.

Up from the black yawn of the main hatch swarmed Zwinglius Turner, grinning and active, like a Chinese pirate in blue dungaree daubed with filth. A thin gray cloud of dust rose after him.

"Whee-e-e! Stinks down there!" he cried joyfully. His voice, movement, and whole aspect were those of a man intoxicated with delight.

So had they been ever since that famous winter day when, like a bomb in the main street, burst the news that Captain Christy had bought the damaged hulk of the Amirald, formally abandoned on an outer ledge of the Little Wolverines. All that fortnight the village had tossed in a delirium of happenings. Strangers had walked the streets. Every day brought more events than talk could keep pace with. Even cynical Mr. Laurel agreed that such a winter had not been known since the Lord Ashburton went ashore in The Gale; even now mysteries remained, enough for years of argument; and factions still

discussed whether the Amirald had been wrecked for the insurance. The company — not without suspicion — had paid it, and had sold at auction, on the underwriters' account, both the brigantine and her cargo of phosphate. Bids had been few and low. An old man and his money, the village agreed, were soon parted; but Captain Christy thought otherwise.

"Joyce," he had declared solemnly, "it 's a godsend. It 's a godsend, girl. D' ye mind, I told ye I had wha 'd-ye-call-ems — prognosticates — in my bones, ye know — that somehow I 'd git another ship." He chuckled, then laughed as heartily as a boy. "When I see 'em keep lights out so, I knowed what their game was! Pack o' rascals! — Well, Joyce, the' won't be no more such sea-lawyer work aboard o' her now!"

His ready laughter, the free flow of his talk, his buoyant stride and shining countenance, seemed to the girl another marvel of the returning spring. It was as when a frozen brook, at some final touch of the thaw, moves downward, crashes, leaps into full-bodied

torrent. Happiness mounted within him like sap in a giant maple.

Often at breakfast he put down his cup untouched, to explain in a tone of wondering delight: —

"Ye know, to be real downright honest, I suspicioned 't was all over, and — and here 't is jes' beginnin', eh, Joyce?"

Or, as she prepared their supper in the little savory kitchen, he came in, humming, from the workshop, his eyes alight, his fingers tarred, a curly shaving of clean pine caught in his beard.

"Well, here goes to wash up!" he announced, as though that were an ecstasy. And later, sitting by the stove, he might break out with: "Yes, sir! I 'm good for ten more years' hard work easily — easily!"

Meantime the crumbling wharf and the deck of the Amirald became a littered meeting-place, where the captain, Zwinglius, and Bunty directed all their able-bodied friends in a labor of love. At first a joke, the repairs engrossed the village. Even Mrs. Gildersleeve's summer boarder, a mouse-like little

man, said to be a musician somewhere in the world of cities, came to lounge in sunny corners. With meek and sensible questions, he slowly won friendship of the captain, and so of the captain's Joyce. And friendships had been rare with this tired stranger.

The Northern summer had sped away, before Captain Christy pronounced the Amirald fit for sea. He had changed her rig to fore-and-aft: "for," he said, "I can't carry no crew to be squarin' yards all day long." On her trial sail as a schooner she behaved handsomely in the bay. Her foresail, it is true, provoked smiles; for — as the captain had stubbornly kept both spar and shroud — the baby square of white canvas reached only to the original foretop. The gap surprised one, as though the vessel had lost a front tooth.

"Diaper on a broomstick!" jeered Master Kibben, at a safe range. "Jigger on a yawl!"

"Ketches wind, anyway," observed the captain, ignoring. "Big enough to keep me and Zing busy. She 's took nigh all my money as 't is. O' course," he added regretfully,

"she ain't up to my own — the old schooner. Else I 'd swap back with Follansbee."

Having dispatched his letter to Wood and Guthrie, he hardly ate or slept for impatience.

"You and Zwinglius Turner," Joyce chided him, "are bad as children before Christmas. Now finish breakfast. Letters can wait."

At last the answer came, and the captain was singing as he brought it home. A cargo ready in ten days, promised the firm; they wrote kindly, offered their old friend terms better than he had hoped. Laughing, planning like a boy for his first voyage, the captain packed his old canvas bag. His deep chant filled the house: —

> "'As they was walkin' on the green,
> *Bow down, bow down,*
> As they was walkin' on the green,
> *The bow is bent to me.*
> As they was walkin' on the green
> To see their father's ships come in.' . . .

"Joyce, there 's mittens you wanted to mend — By gorry, don't seem real, does it? No, sir, like a dream: —

" 'Oho, prove true, prove true,
My love, prove true to me.' "

The squealing wheel of Zwinglius Turner's barrow, piercing the town as he trundled the last supplies to the wharf, made music to the captain. And then, suddenly, an unexpected hand rent the whole fabric of his joy.

He stood one morning beneath a naked balm-o'-gilead on a knoll, overlooking the ruddy, sun-bright sands, the stilted wharves, the patched but shapely body of the Amirald. On the brown-spattered leaves a footstep crackled, and beside him halted the trim, prosperous little figure of the Gildersleeves' lodger.

"Good-morning, captain," he saluted. "Mr. — ah — Bunty — tells me that he 's going with you this voyage."

"That 's right," replied Captain Christy. "Along for comp'ny. Talks real clever. Help, too — fust-class seaman, Bunty is."

They chatted of indifferent matters.

"You know, captain," began the stranger at last, rather shyly, "I 'll be going back to town myself soon, worse luck. You two have

been kind to me. Yes, you have," he insisted quickly: "most people find me too crotchety to bother with. You 've both — been strongly in my thoughts of late. I 've grown very fond of that child." He gave a quiet laugh. "Yes, captain, if I were young and a bachelor, it 's probable I 'd have tried to rob you of her by now. At least," he added soberly, "I think I desire her happiness almost as much as you. Almost, captain. — Do you know, she 's a rarity."

Captain Christy appeared doubtful of this term.

"She 's a good nice girl," he amended heartily.

"By Jove she is!" agreed the other. "But I meant — another aspect." He twisted the point of his gray beard, then fluttered the dead leaves with his cane, as though they hid the right words for his purpose. "She 's that, and more — We 've all three talked together a good bit this summer, and you remember I gave her a few lessons — No, no! a pleasure, I can tell you! — It 's made me think about her future. Now this town: I 'm

very fond of it, but"— he glanced up quizzically — "how about opportunities?"

The vista of gray, pointed gables, the street, vacant but for the rusty Newfoundland perennially asleep on the pink sand, stretched away dead and silent toward the taut skyline of the bay.

"Opportoonities ain't blockin' traffic there, are they?" drawled the captain.

"I should n't say all this," continued the musician, "to a man of your — your active service in real life — except that I know a very little about one subject. That girl, as they say, has music in her. You knew that?"

"She plays real lively, my opinion," ventured Captain Christy.

"More than that," the other assented. "When you think of that old chest of whistles"— With his ferule he transfixed a leaf, twirled it, studied it, then looked the captain in the eye. "She 's a wonder!" he declared fervently. "Mind, I don't say she 'll be a great player, and that nonsense, — but a good one. She has — the gift. I 'm not an enthusiastic man, you know — less than ever.

There are so many thousand fools, masculine, feminine, but mostly neuter, all busy learning the cant, the mechanics, the wise chatter — faugh! when they can't *do* a useful hand's turn in life, or even read and write the English language, or think beyond their Selves — To get away down here, it 's like emptying my pockets, airing the room, brushing my clothes of 'em! — But Joyce is real, and has that rare thing, a Mind. It will take patience, hard work, study, breaking in — You see, she 's in the rough, like — like"—

"A barnyard colt," suggested the captain, all serious attention.

"Ye-es," laughed the musician. "Something not quite so shaggy. I 'll try to be plainer. She has the 'heart that watches and receives,' that 's certain: lacks only the chance. I 've said nothing to her, don't know what means may be at her disposal. But if she could have one year in the city, there 's start enough. With her quickness, we 'd go far. I 've stopped taking pupils: all the more time for her. Of course, my reward would be the fun itself, the pride, seeing the girl forge

ahead, shoot up — by Jove!" — he speared the ground recklessly, — "shoot up into a constellation!"

"Thank ye, sir," mumbled the captain. His uncertain fingers combed at the white beard; his eyes contracted, musing, among the kindly wrinkles that told of distant things long watched. "You 're master gen'rous."

"After the first year, — well, for example, I 'm trustee and Musical Grandpa to a school; teaching kiddies there, she could turn a handsome penny. What do you think?" Forgetting his mouse-like ways, eager with his project, the little man unfolded it as they walked homeward.

In the workshop, now almost bare, Zwinglius stooped about, despoiling another barrowload.

"Zing!" the captain, entering, exploded wrathfully. "Come here! Hit me a handsome kick, will ye? H'ist me one good and solid! Lambaste my jacket!" The mate stared. "I 'm a selfish old — old — old — customer! Always thinkin' o' Jack Christy fust and foremost. Nothin' else, by James

Rice!" He stood regarding Zwinglius, like an aged schoolboy, disgraced, dogged, angry; then swung muttering into the kitchen.

"Hello, Joyce," he said gently. The girl, kneeling before her oven, turned with a smile. His scrutiny was strange, as though he saw in her face some quality never seen there before.

He was silent at dinner; through the afternoon paced the floor, sat figuring on a slate, with the air of a gloomy, patient dunce; but in the yellow glow of the supper table blossomed out so cheerfully with chuckles, laughter, far-fetched jokes, that Joyce's brown eyes were wide and puzzled.

The mingled emotions of that evening she was not soon to forget. As she sat alone by the lamp, the captain — whose heavy steps had creaked across the room above — came slowly downstairs, and paused in the doorway, smiling, with a book in his hand. His voice rang oddly.

"Joyce, I 've got something to give ye, and somethin' I want to say."

To the apprehension in her look he answered quickly.

"It 's good noos. I ben a thoughtless old coot, Joyce; but after this I 'll do better by ye. Ye know, before buyin' the Amirald, I laid the future all out, as I thought. I did n't, not half; but I figgered I had. Well, I wrote Her, Up the Line, and says, 'bout like this: 'If you cal'late to come back some time, as I hope, write me, and I won't buy this brigantine.' 'Bout like that. Well, she never answered."

The tall clock, ticking heavily, marked the stillness of the room.

"She never answered. That — kind o' — set me loose to buy, 'cause ye see, I felt I had n't a fam'ly no more. But"— he halted anxiously.

"But you have!" cried the girl, springing up. She clasped the big, bent shoulders, hugged him. "You have, have n't you? You have, Father Captain!"

His free hand clumsily patted her. "All right, then," he growled, in great relief. His old, familiar manner returned. "Now we can set down and talk."

The girl perched on his elbow-chair, the white head and the brown tousled together.

"So I want ye to hev this. I 'd saved it for her, waitin' for her to grow up, — like you."

The proffered book, a little black Bible, opened at the fly-leaf. Above a date forty years old, they read, in the captain's crabbed antique hand: —

> For Eunice Christy
> from her loving father.
> "Man cannot live by bread alone." Matt. iv, 4.
> "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Romans xvi, 19.

"Oh, Father Captain," faltered the girl, between long silences. She stroked the hard old hands, corded with veins, tattooed with the blue quincunx. "I 'll feel better about your going away, now you 've left me this."

"No, girl," he said gravely. "Ye don't understand. This goes with ye, to steer by when you 're famous, and a great lady, and all."

Laboriously he revealed the musician's plan. After the first shock, the leap of her unbreathed ambition, she listened motionless, pale, large-eyed, as in a dream.

"So, ye see, the cargo 's Nova Scoshy coal for Noobryport. You 'll sail that fur with me, and take the cars from there." He touched the book in her lap. "Now we 've adopted each other, I can pay the fust year or so."

Joyce started again.

"How?" she asked, with vague misgiving.

"Oh, I 'll git the money, dear," he answered, gay and elusive.

"But how?" she insisted.

"Why, I can sell the vessel handy, up in those parts, at a profit, too."

Easy, tremendous, untimely, the sacrifice overbore her: as when a friend, laughing, flushed, his cheer cut short, falls beside his friend in the moment of victory. Here, like a broken trifle, her old hero cast away his final dream and happiness.

"Oh, captain," she cried, choking, between tears and feeble laughter. "Oh, you — I

could n't! I could n't! Don't you see — you never asked — I have plenty for the first year myself — more than four hundred dollars that I 've saved. You old angel! No, I won't listen; it 's wrong, wicked."

"No, Joyce," objected the captain sturdily; "the world 's for the young, ye know."

"It is n't, either!" she protested, shaking him. "It 's for all kinds, and you 're the best in it! Now listen, you dear old goose." . . .

It was a long combat; but happy, resolute youth, guided by woman's wit, at last conquered. "So," she concluded, "we can both be independent. And whether I fail or go ahead, I 'll come home when you — when you 've had voyages enough. So we can each have our wish, father."

"Why — I guess — you 're right!" declared the captain. "So we can!" Transfigured, he swung her in his arms, high to the crossbeams of the ceiling. "Both of us! Hooray!"

And Zwinglius, to whom this world was never clear, entered upon a mad scene of double jigs and capers before the fire.

On a clear September evening the Amirald put out to sea, before a dying wind that veered among the black fir islands. Bunty and Zwinglius stood amidships, watching the infant endeavors of the new foresail. By the taffrail sat Joyce, bareheaded, her hair darkly ruddy in the level glow of sunset waves, against which the captain, a giant silhouette, revolved a quick pattern of radiating spokes. Down the vastness of the sky astern thin arcs of cloud, white overhead, pearl, rose, and saffron toward the west, curved from the zenith like frail ribs of an infinite vaulted aisle spanning sea and land.

"Wind to-morrer, likely." The captain turned his head, and looked down the enormous nave toward the sinking glory. "Might be his arch, — your sailor man's. 'All experience,' eh, Joyce? Well, we 're goin' through it together."

And to them, as to Ulysses, the deep called round with many voices of the past and the future.

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